

**Language Death and Revival
in the British Isles:
Two Case Studies**

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0. 0. Introduction

It is a widely acknowledged and sobering truth among linguists working in the field of endangerment that the last speakers of probably half the world's languages are alive today. The unspoken corollary is that they will be dead tomorrow; inventories and estimates of vitality need constantly to be revised as age takes its toll on already decimated communities and the 'critically endangered' fade into the category of 'extinct'. In 2007, one of the leading scholars in the field, Suzanne Romaine, lamented that 'only two fluent speakers remain of the Warrwa language traditionally spoken in the Derby region of West Kimberley in Western Australia ... Marie Smith Jones is the last person who still speaks Eyak, one of Alaska's 20 some native languages' (2007: 116). The eight years that have elapsed since the publication of her article, 'Preserving Endangered Languages', have witnessed the exequies of all three speakers and their languages. It is an alarmingly recurrent phenomenon. The *Ethnologue* estimates that there are 204 languages with fewer than 10 speakers, 344 languages with 10 to 99, and 548 languages with fewer than 99 speakers. There is a general consensus that most of the 6000 languages spoken in the world in 2015 will not survive until the end of the century.¹

¹*Ethnologue*, founded by the missionary organization SIL International, is the most comprehensive source for speaker numbers of all known languages. According to its scale of endangerment (see Appendix 1), at the Threatened and Shifting levels, intergenerational transmission is in the process of being broken, but the child-bearing generation can still use the language. This is the condition of 1,531 (or 22 percent) of the world's 7,102 known living languages. In the case of Dying languages, the child-bearing generation is no longer able to transmit the language to the next generation, since the only fluent users (if any remain) are above that age. This is the condition of 916 languages (or 13 percent). Languages that have fallen completely out of (even symbolic) use, and are no longer associated with a sense of ethnic identity are Extinct. Since 1950, 367 such languages have been recorded (www.ethnologue.com, accessed 8 February 2015)

The phenomena of language shift, endangerment and loss have been subject of burgeoning academic interest in the last twenty to thirty years.² Concomitantly, there has been a growth in awareness and institutional support – from such bodies as UNESCO or the European Union – for the protection of endangered minority languages. Monographs directed at a non-specialist readership have been numerous. The apocalyptic spirit of the millenium was marked by the publication in the year 2000 of no fewer than three: Nettle and Romaine's *Vanishing Voices*, David Crystal's *Language Death* and Claude Hagège's *Halte à la mort des langues*, followed two years later by Andrew Dalby's *Languages in Danger*. The monitory tone continues in the title of David Harrison's 2007 *When languages die: the extinction of the world's languages and the erosion of human knowledge*, which also underscores the potential loss to linguistic science posed by such extinction and the urgency of documentation irrespective of revitalization. Linguistic salvage has been addressed by Lenore Grenoble and Lindsay Whaley in *Saving Languages: an introduction to language revitalization* (2006), while both endangerment and revitalization are the subject of Sarah Thomason's *Endangered Languages: An Introduction* (2015). The inclusion of the latter in Cambridge University's Linguistics textbooks series signals the maturity of the field.

The drastic diminution of the world's linguistic diversity has become a cause for widespread concern among linguists and anthropologists. In a seminal article (1992), Michael Krauss attempted to instill a certain amount of guilt in the profession, accusing it of neglecting the vitality of the subject

²Language death as a field of academic research may be said to date from the publication of Ion Coteanu's *Cum dispare o limbă (istroromâna)* (Bucharest, 1957). However, it was the extensive fieldwork carried out by Nancy Dorian in the 1980s on East Sutherland Gaelic which consolidated its status as a separate discipline within the broader field of language change. Similar investigations (such as Dressler 1982 and Campbell and Muntzel 1989) followed and demonstrated that linguistic change occurring during language death does not differ essentially from that taking place elsewhere, except in terms of rate, context, and amount of change.

matter of their own investigation: languages and the insights into linguistic structure they potentially embody. Less often are the people themselves who belong to a speech community in the process of language shift or who are directly affected by it the object of attention.

The impending implosion of the world's languages is not unconnected with a vertiginous rise in the world's population during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The factors determining language death are typically non-linguistic (Swadesh 1948: 235). These are extensively listed in Campbell (1994: 1963) but the most commonly cited are socioeconomic and sociopolitical. Socioeconomic factors include lack of economic opportunities, rapid economic transformations, ongoing industrialization, work patterns, migrant labour, the destruction of habitats and communities, emigration and displacement, and the omnipresence of dominant languages as unavoidable vehicles for economic emancipation, these diffused through the media, in particular what Kreuss (1992: 6) dubs an 'incalculably lethal new weapon [the] "cultural nerve gas" of television'. As large language communities expand, others contract. Over the last 500 years, small languages nearly everywhere have come under severe threat, exacerbated in the past fifty years by globalization. Among the sociopolitical factors are official (assimilatory) language policies, discrimination, stigmatization, repression, and armed conflict. Official language policies can be and have been historically a particularly decisive factor in language death. Western colonialism has proved extremely efficient in this respect, as can be gathered from the use of the consumption metaphor encoded in "glottophagy". Another incendiary term frequently encountered in this context is 'linguicide', a concept analogous to genocide. The classic example is the 'English Only' policy of the United States government during the 19th century, designed to force Native Americans to learn English at the expense of their native languages. Many modern parallels can be adduced, such as the repression of Kurdish in Turkey, or Aromanian in Greece. The official status of languages crossing borders may vary according to the statutory laws of the respective countries. Catalan and

Basque, for instance, have official language academies in Spain, but not in France.

Another interconnected pattern is that represented by the threat to the world's biological diversity. Urbanization, deforestation, desertification and the destruction of habitats are regularly cited as having deleterious effects on the natural world. Less attention, however, is devoted to the linguistic consequences of these same phenomena. Arguably, species diversity and linguistic diversity spring from similar evolutionary mechanisms – the action of replication, variation and selection working on hereditary material. Aside from the genetic relationships between languages, linguists too talk about the ecology of a region or country. The threats to both sorts of ecology are interconnected, as can be inferred from the remarkable similarity in the global distribution of languages and species, with diversity highest in the tropics and declining toward the poles.³ The decline in linguistic diversity is normally a result of the process of language shift away from small indigenous languages toward larger, national or regional languages, a shift driven, as has already been mentioned, by social, political and economic factors including migration, urbanization, unification under the aegis of a single nation-state, colonization, and the globalization of trade and communications.

Kreuss explicitly addresses the biological parallel. Of 4,400 mammal species, 326 (7.4 percent) are currently classified as either 'endangered' or 'threatened', that is to say, species which are in 'imminent danger of extinction' or 'in the foreseeable future will be in imminent danger of extinction' (1992: 7). The figure for birds is 231 out of 8,600 species (2.7 percent). The number of languages that are either moribund or in jeopardy makes this menace to the planet's biological largesse seem almost

³ This is a pattern known as Rapaport's rule. Higher biodiversity may be capable of supporting greater cultural diversity, but 'the explanation seems to be that both biological and cultural diversity depend on the same environmental factors such as temperature and rainfall'

insignificant. Jonathan Loh and David Harmon argue in a recent paper, for instance, that ‘the world’s languages, as a group, are more severely threatened than three vertebrate taxa: mammals, birds or reptiles. Languages, globally, are at least as endangered as the most highly threatened vertebrate taxon, the amphibians. Kreuss paints an alarming picture of his own field of specialization, the languages of Alaska. Of the twenty native languages only two are now viable, that is, being learned by children. Taken together with the north Russian minorities the figure is five out of twenty. Of the Native North American languages as a whole, 149 (80 percent) are moribund. In Australia, 90 percent of the 250 Aboriginal languages are near to extinction. It is probably no accident that the highest documented rates of destruction are to be found in the ‘English-speaking world’.⁴

The global picture is no less bleak. The extreme vulnerability of the majority of endangered languages is a consequence of the enormous disparities between the sizes of the populations speaking the world’s languages. If every language were of equal size, among a world population of 7 billion, each would have around 950,000 native speakers, yet 94 percent of humanity speaks only 347 languages, the remaining 6 percent accounting for 95 percent of languages. Eight languages in particular are dominant, spoken by 40 percent of the world’s population.⁵

⁴ Steiner points to ‘the detergent sovereignty of so-called major languages whose dynamic efficacy springs from the planetary spread of mass-marketing, technocracy, and the media.’ (1992: xiv). For a cogent indictment of English linguistic colonialism and its effects on indigenous languages, see Phillipson (1992). His argument, in so far as it applies to Nigeria, is challenged by Joseph Bisong (‘Language choice and cultural imperialism: a Nigerian perspective. BIT 49/2 April 1995, 122-132), who nevertheless fails to offer any data concerning the health or otherwise of Nigeria’s more than 400 indigenous languages.

⁵ Mandarin Chinese (873,014,298 speakers), Spanish (322,299,171), English (309,352,280), Hindi (180,764,791), Portuguese (177,457,180), Bengali (171,070,202), Russian (145,031,551), and Arabic (136,411,737).

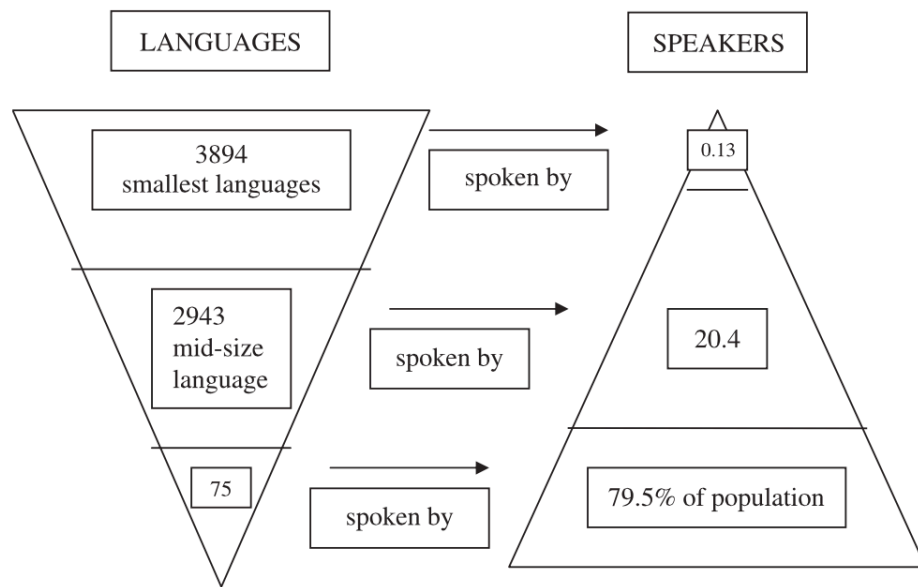


Figure 1. Inverse relation between number of languages and size of population (Romaine 2007)

Of these the Americas account for 15 percent (900), Europe and the Middle East only 4 percent (275); Africa (1,900) and Asia and the Pacific make up the remaining 81 percent (3,000). Only nine countries are host to more than 3,500 languages.⁶ The crucial question is how many of these languages are at present spoken by children? And how many of those spoken by children will be spoken by these children's children later this century? It is estimated that in the period 1490-1990 around half of the world's languages disappeared. Of the remainder, Kreuss reckoned at 50 percent or 3,000 those languages already moribund, and arrives at the 'plausible calculation that - at the rate things are going - the coming century will see either the death or doom of 90 percent of mankind's languages' (1992: 7). His pessimism has recently been echoed by John McWhorter (2015) who states that 'by 2115, it's possible that only about 600 languages will be left on the planet as opposed to today's 6,000'.⁷ Krauss and his fellow presenters at the 1992

⁶ In descending order, Papua New Guinea (850), Indonesia (670), Nigeria (410), India (380), Cameroon (270), Australia (250), Mexico (240), Zaire (210), and Brazil (210). Kreuss (1992)

⁷ 'What the world will speak in 2115', 2 January 2015, *The Wall Street Journal* online; <http://www.wsj.com/articles/what-the-world-will-speak-in-2115-1420234648>, accessed 5 March 2015.

Linguistic Society of America round table on language endangerment deliberately couched their papers in dramatic terms: the colloquium and its published version in *Language* have since been referred to as the ‘wake-up call’ or ‘call to arms’ to the linguistics profession. Krauss’s paper ends ‘we must do some serious rethinking of our priorities, lest linguistics go down in history as the only science that presided obliviously over the disappearance of 90 percent of the very field to which it is dedicated’ (1992: 10). While linguists may have been assiduous in the challenge of documentation of obsolescent languages, it is doubtful whether their efforts will be sufficient to arrest or even seriously retard the slide into dormancy.

It is a commonplace in academic discourse to present languages as anthropomorphic organisms. Terms such as *linguicide* (*language murder/suicide*), and *killer languages* are regularly deployed to convey rhetorically both the finality and agency of language death, yet languages are not imbued with lives independent of their speakers nor are they capable of arriving autonomously at the terms of their coexistence. It is true that the loss of a ‘healthy’ as opposed to obsolescent language can occasionally be mapped with exactitude onto the lifespans of the totality of its speakers. Aboriginal communities had inhabited the island of Tasmania for around 30,000 years prior to the arrival of white settlers in 1803. In what was possibly the only true genocide of English colonial history, they and their language had been killed off within seventy-five years. Similarly, Yahi, a language of the Yana Indians of the northern California, became extinct within a few decades in the last century as the entire population of native speakers was systematically exterminated. As the last speakers died monolingual, this is language death in its least metaphorical guise. In El Salvador in 1932, a massacre in which at least 25,000 ‘communist-inspired’ Indians were killed, effectively put an end to Cacaopera and Lenca – speakers simply ceased to speak them so as not to be identified as Indians (Campbell and Muntzel 1989: 183). The same fate might well await

Aramaic in present-day Syria.⁸ In 1962, an influenza epidemic claimed the life of Trumai, the language of a single village on the Culuene River in Venezuela. Within the Romance family, Vegliote Dalmatian expired along with Antonio Udina, the last native speaker, who, already deaf and toothless, was blown up by a land mine in 1898.

Language death is usually much less abrupt and dramatic than the examples given above. It is usually the endpoint of a sociolinguistic development affecting minority languages in competition with a dominant language or languages and consists of a community's wholesale language shift followed by the individual senescence of its members. During this process the cultural traditions attached to the minority language and the ethnic distinctiveness of the group that speaks it may also perish. Attitudes are crucial in determining to whether languages are maintained or abandoned. Negative attitudes are often internalized by speakers, and use of a minority language comes to be stigmatized, so that speakers feel ashamed of it. Speakers are then less likely to transmit the language to their children, leading to a self-perpetuating downward spiral: 'When the children object to speaking a language, gradually forget it or pretend to have forgotten it because they are ashamed of it, its future is much less assured' (Calvet 1998:75).

The deaths of the last speakers are of symbolic significance. To take examples from the Celtic family alone, Cornish is thought to have perished in the person of 88 year-old Dolly Pentreath in 1777. Manx has not been spoken natively since the death of nonagenarian Ned Madrell in 1974. The defunct dialects of Scottish Gaelic have likewise had their final guardians. Alexandra Stewart, the last native speaker of Perthshire Gaelic, died on February 28th. 1991. Lachlan Macdonald was the last survivor of the 36-

⁸ Sarah Claire Jordan, 'Aramaic: Where did it come from and will it survive?' 10 May, 2015; Alpha Omega Translations: <http://alphaomegatranslations.com/2015/05/10/aramaic-where-did-it-come-from-and-will-it-survive/>, accessed 12 August 2015.

strong community evacuated in 1930 from the Atlantic island of St. Kilda. St. Kildan Gaelic died with him.

Mapping language death onto individual lives, with their relatively well-defined physical boundaries, is often of course a matter of convenience: the boundaries in language death are fuzzier, given that moribund languages are often subject to severe attrition before they cease to be spoken altogether and moreover tend to have aphasic afterlives, in the form of greetings, toasts, fixed phrases, obscenities, rhymes etc., in the speech of so-called 'rememberers'. As will be argued below, languages may fall into near-total disuse long before the deaths of last speakers. However, the death of the lone relic individual does serve vividly to root the organic metaphor of language death in a human reality and to channel into a single event the irremediable loss that attends the death of a human language.

Languages have of course developed, altered, grown and waned in importance, and ceased being used throughout human history. For some observers language death is merely the unavoidable corollary of language birth and thus has a natural place in the ecology of language (Mufwene 2001, 2004); others would go further and applaud the disappearance of small languages, which are perceived as a hindrance to intercultural understanding, efficient international communication and economic prosperity (Malik 2000). In particular, there is a 'common-sense' folk linguistic ideology common among the monolingual Anglophone general public which questions the practicality and worth of linguistic diversity.

There was once a consensus, now contested, that with a single exception, languages cannot be resurrected once dead:

Among languages, there is no Lazarus. One often hears the claim that Hebrew is a modern 'revival'. However, Hebrew never died. Always the prestige language of its speakers, for religious and ethnic reasons, Hebrew was the written and sung language of Jewish religious

services, so it was constantly heard and spoken. Eventually, because of political necessity with the founding of a Jewish state in 1948, Hebrew was raised from a ritual second language to an active first language. Modern linguistic revival attempts, such as with Manx and Cornish, invariably remain the diversion of small interest groups, without large-scale linguistic repercussions: the metropolitan languages that replaced these remain the first language. Most linguists accept that the mass extinction of human languages is already a foregone conclusion, the price society is paying for a new global society (Fischer 2001: 198).

0. 1. Summary, objectives, methods.

It is the ‘diversion of the small interest groups’ alluded to above that in part is the object of this study, which aims to address the phenomena of language shift, endangerment, death, and revival, or resurrection, as it is occasionally dubbed when applied to languages with no native speakers. Specifically, it presents two case-studies from within the Celtic family of languages, in which prolonged contact with English created a situation of transitional bilingualism leading eventually to a break in intergenerational transmission and the loss of these languages, Cornish and Manx respectively. In both cases, universally negative attitudes on the part of speakers of the recessive languages themselves precipitated their demise. By contrast, the revival movements grew up among antiquarian enthusiasts outside of the last communities, and problematically in the case of Cornish, some two hundred years after the death of Cornish as a regularly used vernacular. The thesis is divided into seven chapters, the first two of which are general and theoretical in scope. These are followed by four which deal specifically with the histories of Cornish and Manx from their genesis to their disappearance and the factors involved in their death and subsequent revival. A final chapter brings together some common strands in the neo-Celtic revivals, assesses their success and attempts to foresee how they might evolve in the future.

Chapters One and Two aim to provide the historical background and theoretical framework in which the subsequent chapters may be understood. In particular, Chapter One, on the one hand, introduces language death as a long-attested historical phenomenon in situations of language contact, such as that of Latin and Greek in their epochs of expansion, and therefore simply an unavoidable feature of language ecology (Nettle and Romaine 2000, Ostler 2011). On the other hand, it also reflects voices of alarm raised by number of linguists in recent decades at the vertiginous loss of linguistic diversity which has characterized the past forty years (Austin and Sallabank 2011). The Celtic languages in particular have been subject to severe attrition and the salient factors involved are discussed here. A separate topic addressed in this chapter are the typical linguistic changes undergone by dying languages, arguably simplifications no different from those expected in languages in contact but accelerated as features of the dominant language are adopted wholesale and domains of use of the recessive language contract. In the secondary literature, this is described as language suicide.

Chapter Two offers an introduction to concepts such as language revival and revitalization in the context of endangered languages and explores the problems involved in resurrecting a language that no longer has any native speaker base to sustain and underwrite it. Most acutely in the case of Cornish, doubts have been expressed about the authenticity of its revived form, given that in its final stages the language was poorly attested, presenting lexical and morphological lacunae that required recourse to Middle Cornish texts and Welsh and/or Breton-based neologisms. Price Williams, for example, would go so far as to describe the revived language as ‘Cornic’. For almost thirty years the energies of an increasingly fragmented revivalist movement were dissipated in factionalism and bitter *ad hominem* infighting concerning the desirable and legitimate sources of revived Cornish. Revivalists initially made heady claims of parity with Hebrew as proof of life after language death but that language’s revival is of an entirely different order. Revived or neo-Cornish has so far, and in the

foreseeable future, had a negligible spoken presence in the everyday life of Cornish society. It is increasingly present, however, in the visual landscape as commerce and the tourist industry have awoken to its potential as a means to enhance Cornish mystique.

Chapter Three is essentially a narrative of the decline and disappearance of the indigenous language of what had once been an independent kingdom, which ceded to the political dominance of Anglo-Saxon Wessex in the tenth century. English gradually expanded west into Cornwall, increasingly so after disastrous failed rebellions and subsequent repression in the Tudor period. As early as 1680, reasons were being offered for the decline of Cornish. English was used progressively in the administrative domain from the 10th century, and was only temporarily halted by the Norman invasion. The role of English in the religious domain is also judged to have been important. The principal instigator of the revival movement, Henry Jenner (1904:12), writes that '[t]he Reformation did much to kill Cornish', and calls the 'prime cause of the decline' of Cornish. Another reason revolves around changing social networks. Previously, there had been significant trade and religious contacts with Brittany, where the closely related Breton was spoken. With the loss of Breton independence (1536) and political and religious differences between England and France, these contacts were lost in the first half of the sixteenth century. At the same time, contacts with English-speakers increased through immigration, and the employment of Cornish-speakers in the English military and merchant navy. Finally, Cornish lost its role in the people's cultural lives. Most notably, the old tradition of Cornish-language mystery plays came to an end, partly on account of the disapproval of the Protestant Church. By the beginning of the eighteenth century the language was confined to small fishing communities on the far west coast and finally to lone relic individuals within those communities. The alleged last speaker died in 1777.

Chapter Four traces the history of the Cornish revival from its origins in the late nineteenth century as a reflection of antiquarian interest in the county's

early history. There were initially no pretensions to restoring the language to everyday use, or to utilizing it as a vehicle and justification of Cornish nationalism. The proselytization of Cornish as a cornerstone of the county's heritage and identity and a living language to be learned and used developed later. Particular attention will be paid to the founding father of the movement, Henry Jenner, whose *A Handbook of the Cornish Language* (1904) was a crucial catalyst. Revivalist efforts culminated in the British Government's decision in 2002 to recognize Cornish as falling under Part II (Article 7) of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The presence of Cornish in education and the media is also documented, as is the fraught history of its standardization. This has been a particularly divisive issue within the movement and has only recently been resolved with the ratification in 2008 of the Standard Written Form, subsequently revised as Kernowek Standard. This standard had been preceded by Unified Cornish (1929), Modern or Late Cornish (1980s), Kernewek Kemmyn (1986), and Unified Cornish Revised (1995), all of them reflecting in part varying ideological stances but also indicative of a rift between, on the one hand, amateur enthusiasts anxious to make the language as transparent and easily acquired as possible and, on the other, professional Celticists insistent on linguistic rigour. The fact that the Middle Cornish of the Mystery Plays is the most richly attested phase of the language and Late Cornish textually meagre as well as heavily anglicized meant that the language could not simply be picked up where it had left off, so disagreement concerning which Cornish to revive was perhaps inevitable. It is estimated that there are at present several hundred fluent speakers of the language and a number of families in which the children are being brought up bilingually with English.

Chapter Five explores the history and decline of Manx Gaelic, a member of the Goidelic branch of the Insular Celtic languages developed from the Old Irish (Gaelic) and brought to the Isle of Man during the fourth and fifth centuries CE by missionaries and others from Ireland. The Isle of Man, equidistant between England and Ireland, is a British Crown Dependency and not part of either the United Kingdom or the European Union. The

Vikings began to raid the island in 800CE, eventually becoming assimilated into the local culture, and bilingual in Norse and Gaelic. After the death of the last King of Mann in 1265, the island came under the control of Scotland and over the following two centuries, passed through periods of Scottish and English control. Manx emerged as a distinct language during this period. The influence of English on Manx can be traced back at least as far as 1405, when tenure of the island was granted to Sir John Stanley by Henry IV. As a result the Manx people became isolated to some extent from the Gaelic-speaking people of Ireland or Scotland, contacts, trade with England increased, and the island acquired English-speaking administrators. Little is known, however, of the interaction between English and Gaelic on the Isle of Man prior to the Reformation. The first book to be published in Manx (in 1707), *Coyrle Sodjey* [The Principles and Duties of Christianity], reflected the project of evangelization at a time when over 60 percent of the population were monolingual speakers. Nevertheless, attitudes towards the Manx language were not universally favourable. The Anglican Church withdrew its support for Manx-medium instruction in schools, and by 1782 English had become the main language of instruction in all but five schools. English increasingly became the language of the towns. The burgeoning tourist industry in the following century also contributed greatly to the devaluation of Manx, which increasingly came to be associated, even by Manx speakers themselves, with poverty, backwardness and ignorance. Parents, determined to spare their children social stigma, began not to transmit the language to their offspring, so that by the last decades of the nineteenth century there ceased to be Manx-speaking communities on the island. Notwithstanding this, by quirks of longevity and acquisition from grandparents, numerous native speakers with a range of competence survived well into the twentieth century, many of them being recorded by visiting Celticists. The last of these speakers died in 1974.

Chapter Six charts the history of the revival of Manx. Following the decline in the use of Manx during the nineteenth century, The Manx Language Society was founded in 1899. By the middle of the twentieth century only a

few elderly native speakers remained but recordings of their speech underpinned a scholarly revival and a few individuals started teaching the language in schools. In 1992 the Manx Language Unit was formed, consisting of three members and headed by Manx Language Officer, whose first incumbent, Dr Brian Stowell, can be said to be responsible almost single-handedly for the success of the movement (Broderick 1999). Manx is now firmly established in the school curriculum at primary level. In the 2011 census, 1,823 out of 80,398, or 2.27 percent of the population, claimed to have knowledge of Manx. It also enjoys the support of the Isle of Man government, whose propaganda interests it serves, and has a modest media and internet presence, as reported by the national press on several occasions in the course of 2015. This does not entail, however, that Manx has been restored as a living community language. Rather, for the community at large, it is a component in the construction of a Manx identity.

Chapter Seven sets out on the one hand to identify similarities and contrasts between the Cornish and Manx revivals and on the other to describe a model of revitalization applicable to both. The model would acknowledge that restoration of the language to any widespread vernacular use is an improbable and almost certainly unattainable goal. The respective revivals have largely been confined to date to a numerically small and, in the case of Cornwall, geographically widely scattered and heterogeneous group of enthusiasts and activists and this is likely to continue to be the case. These activists may serve to galvanize interest in the population at large and encourage authorities and local enterprises to adopt the two languages as emblems of a distinctive ethnic, non-English identity. The languages have an albeit tenuous foothold in the state education system but recent funding-cuts in the case of the Isle of Man and the perennial pressures of the mainstream curriculum are threatening to curtail its expansion. Revernacularization, then, is a dim and distant prospect, as is institutionalization in all but token form, whereas ‘language reintroduction’ (Eastman 1979) involving the understanding of language as culture ‘to be integrated into an existing speech community where another language is,

and will remain dominant' may be seen as a more realistic endeavour, one that still serves to enrich citizens' notions of what it means to be Cornish and Manx.

Over the last twenty-five years, an increasing number of books and scholarly articles have addressed endangerment and revitalization. Nancy Dorian is the pioneer in both the linguistic and the sociolinguistic study of language obsolescence and death: her work has been extremely influential from her earliest publications, such as her 1973 article 'Grammatical change in a dying dialect' to her groundbreaking *Language death: the life cycle of a Scottish Gaelic Dialect* (1981) and important later collection *Small-Language Fates and Prospects: Lessons of Persistence and Change from Endangered Languages: Collected Essays* (2014). She also edited a book that has claims to be the most widely cited work in the field of language endangerment: *Investigating obsolescence: studies in language contraction and death* (1989). At least one handbook on endangered languages has also appeared, *The Cambridge handbook of endangered languages* (2011), edited by Peter Austin and Julia Sallabank. UNESCO's *Atlas of the world's languages in danger* is one of a number of regularly updated web sources that chart the fortunes of such languages. Other important websites are *Ethnologue* and the *Endangered Languages Project*, 'an online resource to record access and share samples of and research on endangered languages as well as to share advice and best practices for those working to document or strengthen languages under threat'.

Of especial importance for the sphere of the Celtic languages is the publication in 2015 of a special issue of the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* on the emergence of "new speakers" in the context of some of Europe's minority languages, Basque, Gallician and Catalan among as well as Irish, Breton and Manx. The "new speaker" label is used to describe individuals with little or no home or community exposure to a minority language but who instead acquire it through immersion or bilingual educational programmes, revitalization projects or as adult language

learners. Their emergence draws attention to the ways in which minority linguistic communities are changing on account of globalization and the new profiles of speakers that this new social order is creating. As the numbers of speakers of Celtic languages in the traditional heartlands of Ireland, Scotland and Brittany decline inexorably, so they are being replaced by speakers of neo-versions of the respective varieties, who are expected in the future to acquire greater legitimacy and authority. This phenomenon has implications for speakers of neo-Manx and neo-Cornish too, who though not not in thrall to or competing with any traditional communities nonetheless experience anxieties concerning the authenticity of their revised forms. What kind of phenomenon then is represented by these revitalization projects and are they comparable with the sorts of measures applied to living endangered minority languages? Can they be judged successful or are they fundamentally an irrelevance?

The methodology followed in this study is predominantly meta-historiographical. Considerations of a mainly practical nature have precluded the possibility of direct ethnographic fieldwork in Cornwall or the Isle of Man, although I did benefit from a visit to the *Institute of Cornish Studies* in Exeter in 2013 and have maintained regular contact with some of those directly involved in the revitalization movement. If this study has any application, it is as a contribution to refining the notion of revitalization in a sophisticated Western society which is now at a considerable remove from the social contexts of the dying versions of the respective languages. No study to date, as far as the author is aware, has compared and contrasted the Cornish and Manx revivals. It may be that the Reversing Language Shift model applied to such endangered languages is inappropriate once it is acknowledged that revernacularization is not a viable goal. Revitalization is often publicized and fomented by activists through whose prism of utopian optimism it is not always possible to discern the underlying reality. Progress and achievements are not infrequently overestimated. Hence, a counterbalance, even counterblast, may be usefully supplied by the more

clinical gaze of the disinterested outsider.

Chapter 1 .Language Death

1.0 Introduction

1.1. Language death as a constant in history

Language death is far from a solely contemporary phenomenon. Mufwene (2002: 2) exhorts linguists to embed language death in a historical perspective longer than European colonization of the past hundred years, in order to highlight the competition and selection that has characterised the coexistence of languages since probably the beginnings of agriculture (Nettle and Romaine 2000), and thus also to shed more light than hitherto on natural trends of language shift and loss. Such an approach, according to Mufwene, would make the linguistic enterprise comparable to that of environmentalists concerned with endangered species, who have first sought to understand the conditions that sustain or affect biodiversity in the same econiche.

The *Stammbaums* of genetic linguistics, which illustrate language diversification and proliferation are apt to mask the concomitant loss of indigenous languages. The dispersal of Indo-European languages involved the near-complete disappearance of their competitors (Basque and Finnish being notable exceptions). Clackson (2015) charts the shifting ecology of the Mediterranean basin in the course of a single millenium, roughly 500 BCE to 500 CE:



Map 1.1 Tentative map of languages around the Mediterranean basin in c. 500 BCE.

Figure 2: Languages around the Mediterranean c. 500 BCE (Clackson, 2015)

To take just a single region in the ancient world, Asia Minor, practically all of its indigenous languages became extinct under the pressure of Hellenization: Hatti, Hurrian, Hittite and the other Anatolian languages, Phrygian, Galatian, Gothic, and a number of other languages known by name only such as Mysian, Lycaonian, Cataonian, Cilician, Bagtiaonian and Cappadocian (Janse 2002: 347-359). The prestige of a politically and culturally superior *lingua franca* such as Greek was such that it was later exploited by the Romans to impose their own authority in Asia Minor. Language death did not immediately result from the imposition of Greek in the East and Latin in the West. Most of the indigenous languages went through an intermediate stage of bilingualism (Adams, Janse & Swain 2002). The historian Thucydides speaks of a stock figure, the “Kàr díglottos [bilingual Carian]” (Histories 8. 85). Bilingualism leads to borrowing and language death is an extreme case ‘where an entire language is borrowed at the expense of another’ (Campbell 1994: 1960).⁹

⁹ There are, however, cases where the bilingual stage does not *stricto sensu* lead to language death, but where the subordinate language is maintained and subjected to heavy borrowing, leading to the emergence of a contact language, defined as ‘any new language that arises in a contact situation identifiable by the fact that its lexicon and grammatical structures cannot all be traced back

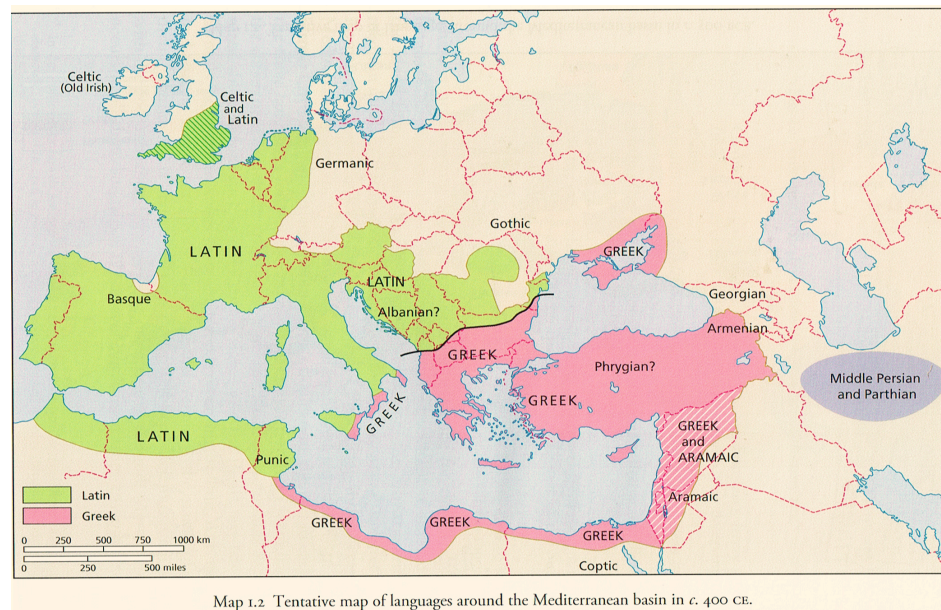


Figure 3: : Languages around the Mediterranean c. 400 CE (Clackson, 2015)

This presumed scenario can be surmised for a wide range of ancient languages: Akkadian, Ugaritic, Sumerian, Phoenician, Pahlavi, Sogdian, Thracian and Dacian, Faliscan, Oscan, Umbrian, Etruscan, some of which are known from written testimony, others only whose names are known and probably many more that became extinct in total anonymity. The Celtic languages have been major casualties, but principally on account of Christian evangelism. Latin had become the marker of the universal church, membership of which entailed embracing its language. As Brown (2013: 232) writes,

Latin won its final triumph as the spoken language of most of the former territories of the Roman empire in the very last, more desperate centuries of Roman rule. Had the empire fallen when the 'Roman peace' was at its height, in the second century AD, Latin would have vanished along with the empire in much of western Europe. Celtic would have re-emerged as the dominant language in Gaul and much of Spain. France and Spain might well have

primarily to the same source language' (Thomason 2001: 158). Strictly speaking, the original language has not died, but has been transformed into a new language.

become Celtic-speaking countries, as Brittany and Wales are today. It was only in the last century of the empire that the slow pressure of bureaucrats, landowners and the Christian clergy ensured that Latin replaced languages which had existed since prehistoric times.

The expansion and contraction of languages in the ancient world is otherwise problematic. In recent years, linguists and others have become increasingly interested in correlating language diversity and variation to a range of other factors, including population size, the geographical environment, and social and economic organization. Nichols (1992) proposed that in prehistoric periods older populations tend to get driven back into mountainous, inaccessible and remote or relict areas, while more recent incomers occupy more easily accessible open plains or steppes, which is known as a 'spread zone'. In the relict areas, there is a greater concentration of different language families, but in the areas of recent population spread, there is reduced linguistic diversity and a greater number of speakers of each single language. Renfrew (1987) linked the spread of the Indo-European population with what he dubbed a 'wave of advance' of the first farmers, who gradually pushed earlier populations into the geographical margins as they progressively subjected more land to cultivation. There may also be more complex connections between environmental and social factors and linguistic diversity. According to the archaeologist John Robb (1993), the size and number of languages in prehistory may have varied according to the dominant means of social organization. In the Palaeolithic period, languages would have been spoken by small bands of hunter-gatherers ranging over a wide area, while in the Neolithic period, as farming and other social changes created larger, more sedentary populations, there must have been a proliferation of languages, each with more speakers. Then, later, from the end of the fourth millennium BCE onwards, military expansions and colonization led to the enslavement and destruction of a number of peoples and, with that, to the loss of linguistic variety.

It has been observed that languages supported by a literate culture and a greater number of speakers change at a slower rate than varieties spoken by only a small, illiterate population. This led Nettle (1999) to develop computer simulations of language change and spread. He theorized that in areas of greater ‘ecological risk’, e.g. threats to the food supply and livelihoods, extensive social networks would develop to offset the effects of disasters, leading to a reduction in an area’s linguistic diversity.

However, all of these models presented for understanding and explaining linguistic diversity have proved controversial. Some parts of the world, such as Central America, display environmental factors characteristic of a spread zone, but are home to speakers of many different language families. Some instances of language dispersal are linked to farming, but others are not, and there are many regions, again including Central America, where shared innovative agricultural practices have not led to linguistic change. As Clackson observes (2015: 27), social factors, including the openness of communities to change, gender roles and marriage patterns, and community size and organization also play important roles in language change and diversity, probably much greater than environmental, economic or geographical differences. Furthermore, ‘the historical effects of migrations or invasions may linger in the linguistic record for centuries, and each wave of population movements is imprinted upon a well-trodden linguistic terrain’. It may be that, as is not uncommonly the case in historical sociolinguistic explanation, the full and complex range of factors triggering any particular change is no longer available to us.

1.2. The world’s languages in jeopardy

Language death must to some extent be accepted as the inevitable consequence of language shift and displacement, but it is also arguably our obligation to stave it off for as long as possible in the interests of

safeguarding linguistic and cultural diversity.¹⁰ Languages are not necessarily impermanent, even though they may be altered beyond recognition by the natural process of change, nor are they inherently prone, as was once thought, to cycles of growth, decay and obsolescence. They die from a haemorrhage of speakers. Jespersen quotes Bopp's dictum (1827) that 'Languages are to be considered organic natural bodies, which are formed according to fixed laws, develop as possessing an inner principle of life, and gradually die out because they do not understand themselves any longer. It is not possible to determine how long languages may preserve their full vigour of life and of procreation.'¹¹ This pre-Darwinian view has long since been superseded, but organic metaphors predispose towards similar notions. Moreover, as dying languages themselves alter structurally, they are often regarded in their final stages as debased and impoverished, a factor which itself may negatively influence attitudes and accelerate shift. However, as already suggested, the causes of language death are non-linguistic. Their fates are inextricably tied up with the choices, necessities and fortunes of the human beings who speak them. For Mufwene (2002), languages are parasitic species whose vitality depends on the communicative behaviours of their speakers who in turn respond adaptively to changes in their socio-economic ecologies. Language shift is thus in part an adaptive response to changes in a particular culture as speakers endeavour to meet their day-to-day communicative needs. One language may be deselected in favour of another, generally one believed to be politically, culturally and socially prestigious, associated with military or technological superiority, and possessing socially mobile and dynamic speakers. Language shift describes changes in morphological, syntactic and lexical usage between dominant and minority language groups which may

¹⁰ For a dissenting, more non-interventionist perspective, see Peter Ladefoged (1992) and a reply by Nancy C. Dorian (1993).

¹¹ Quoted in *Language: its Nature, Development and Origin*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1922, pp. 65-66.

result in a complete transference of the mother tongue. Sasse (1992:13) sees language shift as being ‘triggered by the decision of a speech community to cease to transmit their language to their descendants’. This decision could result from a more powerful authority usurping a weaker language group and inculcating a negative attitude towards their ethnic identity, such that the minority language-speakers decide to integrate into the larger ethnic group. They may see alternative, usually socio-economic, advantages to adopting a more dominant language or it may be an unconscious and insidious process of assimilation as the cultural norms of the majority permeate and gradually overtake the indigenous/minority identity/language.

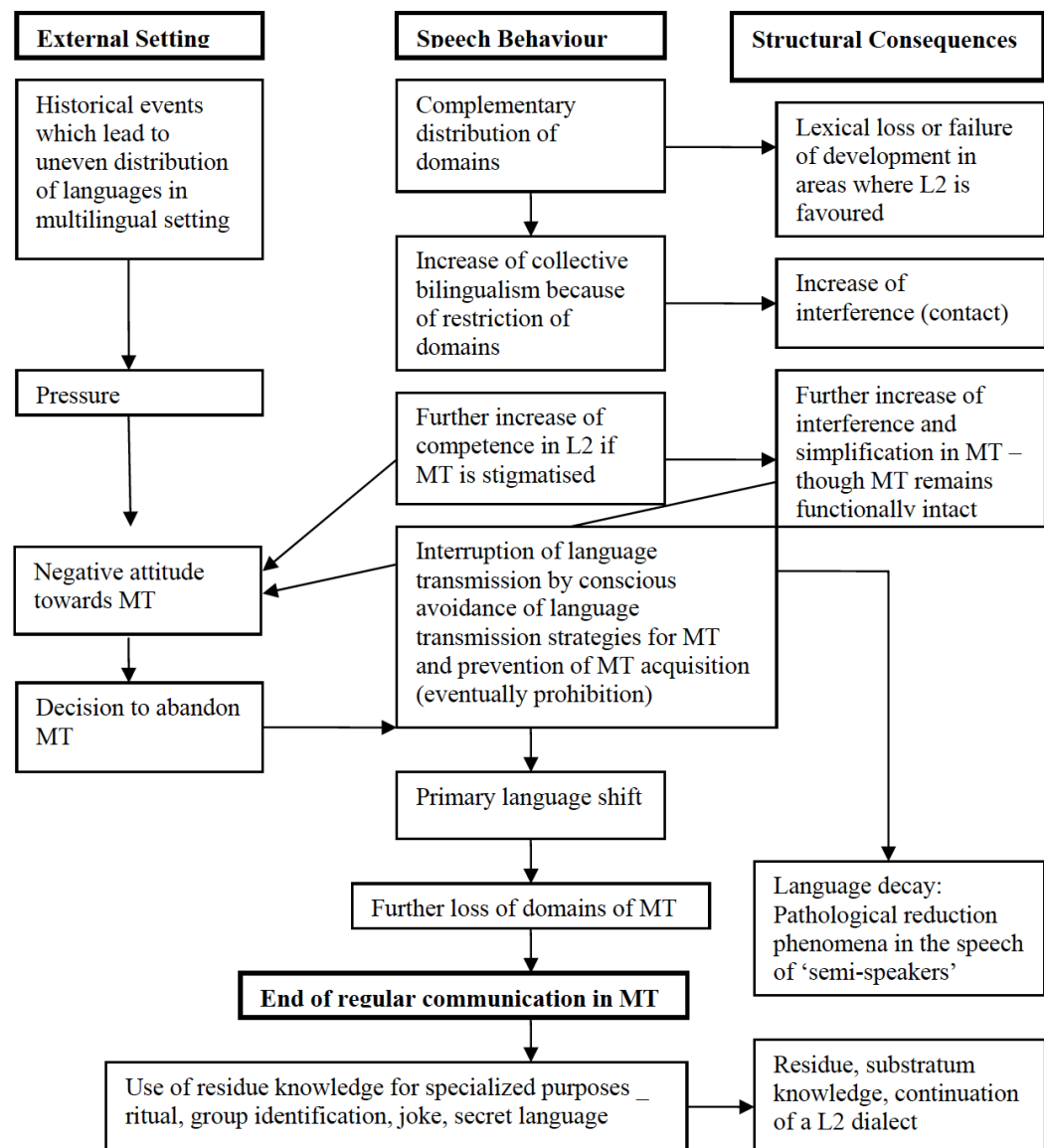


Figure 4: The process of language death (Sasse 1992)

1.3. Typologies of language death

Discussion of the various types of language death typically revolves round three contrasting pairs. The first pair concerns the time-scale of language loss. 'Sudden language death', as in the examples already cited, describes the abrupt disappearance of a language brought about by genocide, natural disasters, or epidemics. 'Radical language death' may be equally swift but is more closely associated with political repression, such as in the example cited from El Salvador. Nevertheless, the distinction is not wholly clear or well-motivated. Much more common than either is 'gradual language death', which occurs in a language contact situation in which there is a widespread shift of allegiance on the part of a population away from a language native to an area and towards a more recently introduced language. This second language becomes dominant often because it is spoken natively by socially dominant speakers, thus acquiring for the rest of the population associations of wealth, prestige and advancement. There is typically a stage of transitional bilingualism, over a number of generations, in which the dominant language encroaches into domains formerly the preserve of the subordinate language. Finally, there comes a point when parents no longer consider it necessary or worthwhile to pass on the obsolescing language to their children, who, deprived of the input necessary to formulate their own internalized grammar, and scarcely motivated themselves to acquire active competence, will in turn learn the language imperfectly and not use it sufficiently to become fully fluent speakers (so-called 'semi-speakers'¹²). By this stage the language is effectively doomed.

The second pair of terms concerns direction of loss in terms of domains of use. 'Bottom-to-top language death' occurs when the repertoire of registers atrophies from the bottom up. Formal, ritual contexts remain intact while domestic everyday usage recedes. Examples are Classical Latin and Byzantine and *katharevousa* Greek (the former preserved in the Orthodox

¹² Dorian (1981), in her study of East Sutherland Gaelic, characterizes semi-speakers as fully competent receptively but having a halting delivery, and aberrant grammar and phonology.

liturgies, the latter, until recently, the language of some conservative newspapers). Campbell and Muntzel (1989: 184) report a speaker of Chiapanec in Mexico whose knowledge consisted of a few residual words and a long *alabanza*, memorized to be performed on ritual occasions but whose meaning was unknown to the speaker. It is much more commonly the case, however, that minority languages remain longer in casual, domestic and intimate domains, the formal end of the stylistic continuum being ceded earlier. Their attrition, that is to say, is ‘top-to-bottom’. The death knell sounds when there is nothing left for them to be used appropriately about.

Lastly, Aitchison (1981) makes the distinction between ‘language suicide’ and ‘language murder’. ‘Language suicide’ occurs most commonly when two closely related languages co-exist in a community, the less prestigious variety progressively absorbing vocabulary, constructions and sounds from its socially superior neighbour until it obliterates itself. In the case of a creole and its superstrate, ‘language suicide’ is tantamount to decreolization – the creole ‘gets devoured by its parent’ (1981:210). Aitchison cites the example of the urban varieties of Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea. Under pressure from English, the language of education and commerce, the creole is stretched, as it were, into an acrolect-basilect continuum according to the degree of infiltration of the superstrate. The basilect or ‘deep’ creole may or may not disappear. A similar process takes place in the reduction and loss of dialect (usually unfavourably evaluated) in favour of the (desirable) standard. ‘Broad’ Scots is generally unintelligible to the average speaker of standard English. Since the mid-sixteenth century, however, it has been steadily eroded by the lexis, phonology and syntax of its southern rival. Historically, this has created a rich variety of register, but anglicization has progressively curtailed the options available to the Scots speaker. Kay’s assertion (1986: 177) that ‘the raukle tongue is a thrawn craitur that will bide on and on, tholan ilka dint fowk has thrown at it’ is manifestly wishful thinking and typifies the wilful blindness that all too often afflicts the revitalization activist. Twenty-first century Scots would be puzzled to know

what ‘ilka dint’ and ‘raukle tongue’ meant.¹³ Much of the discussion of language endangerment, for both academic and general audiences, has been vitiated by uncritical revivalist enthusiasm rather than reflection or evidence-based discussion (Cameron 2007).

In ‘language murder’ the two systems involved are often unrelated typologically and there need not be any interference from the newcomer. The lower prestige language is ousted as the higher prestige variety extends across domains. These terms have won a measure of approval in the literature (e.g. Edwards 1994, McMahon 1994), but are nevertheless still problematic. The criteria for distinguishing the two types have not been clearly established. It would seem that both forms of decline are ultimately suicidal inasmuch as a new variety is adopted. Human beings generally resist their own murder. Language murder, however, is often aided and abetted by the speakers of the recessive language themselves. As Denison writes: ‘... it is as though a culture, in the sense of the totality of structured activity of the speech community, sometimes “decides”, for reasons of functional economy, to suppress a part of itself in the process of onward transmission’ (1977: 21). Terms that involve neatly differentiated victim and oppressor (‘us and them’), with all the moral opprobrium which is attached to the latter, may be convenient ideologically, but fail to do justice to the complexity of the relationships and attitudes involved in most language death situations. More attention needs to be paid to factors that have favoured particular languages at the expense of others, factors which lie in the changing socio-economic conditions to which speakers respond adaptively for their survival. Linguists have typically lamented the loss of ancestral languages and cultures especially among populations colonised by Europeans, arguing that relevant languages and cultures must be revitalised or preserved by all means. Absent from the same literature are assessments of the costs and benefits that the affected populations have derived from

¹³ For an outsider’s (sceptical) perspective on the survival of Scots, see Manfred Görlach (2002): *A Textual History of Scots* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter.

language shift in their particular socio-economic ecologies (Mufwene 2002: 4).

1.4. Structural consequences of language death.

Despite a seminal article by Swadesh (1948), the study of language death has emerged as a field in its own right only in the last few decades. MacMahon (1994: 284) designates Dorian (1981) as the ‘first major study’. Nonetheless, there is already a sizeable bibliography with over sixty language death situations discussed. Gorlach’s statement (1986: 530) that findings are limited in number and spotty in terms of the languages and the aspects of grammar that have been studied’ is no longer accurate. That said, consensus, even about some of the terminology, is still a distant prospect. The brief of the sociolinguist is to identify the sets of conditions that cause people to give up one language in favour of another, but the typical changes undergone by abandoned languages is another primary object of study. It is widely assumed that language death has linguistic consequences for the dying language, and that reduction in use entails a reduction in structure. There is also agreement that obsolescing languages are just as subject to normal changes as fully viable ones, but that, as is the case with Manx, it is not easy to distinguish between normal changes and those attributable to obsolescence. Language death is also said to involve ‘normal’ linguistic changes (that is to say, language-internal developments and the sorts of ordinary contact-induced change found in ‘healthy’ languages), but these occur at an accelerated rate and in great numbers (Dorian 1981, Gal 1989, MacMahon 1994, Thomason 2015).

The following is an brief outline of changes commonly observed in obsolescing languages. Whether any are an essential part of all language death situations has not yet been established. Morphological reduction is common, in particular, the loss of case systems and a tendency towards a more rigid grammatical word order (Campbell and Muntzel 1989, Dorian 1981): syntactic simplification, with loss of complex constructions (e.g.

subordinate clauses), deriving often from stylistic shrinkage and defective childhood acquisition. It is taken as axiomatic that a semi-speaker will use a smaller number of syntactic devices than a fully competent speaker of the same language (Andersen 1982). A preference for analytic constructions over synthetic ones, as in the almost exclusive use in Breton of the analytic as against the synthetic present, and the replacement in East Sutherland Gaelic of synthetic conjugated prepositions by free-standing prepositions and pronouns (Dressler 1988, Dorian 1981), is a normal change, but the equally normal reverse process has not been observed. Lexical changes tend to involve interference and convergence: extensive borrowing, calquing, semantic shifts determined by the dominant language) and cessation of native word-formation processes, are all reported.

As far as phonology is concerned, Andersen (1982: 95) advances three hypotheses to which subsequent research has tended to lend support:

- (1) the bilingual speaker of a threatened language will make fewer phonological distinctions than would a fully competent speaker of the same language.
- (2) Nevertheless, he or she will preserve distinctions shared by both his or her languages even while making fewer of the distinctions found only in the threatened language.
- (3) Distinctions with a high functional load will survive longer in the speaker's use of his or her weaker language than distinctions which have a low functional load.

For example, speakers of American Finnish merge contrastive long vowels with their short counterparts. Long and short consonants are not distinguished in Channel Islands French, and the trilled and flapped /r/ are merged in varieties of dying Spanish (Campbell and Muntzel 1989). Other findings are the development of variability where obligatory rules fail to apply or are applied optionally and the overgeneralisation and undergeneralisation of rules. While multiple causation is always available as a back-stop, it cannot be proven which of these tendencies are specific to the

language death process and which the consequences of other kinds of languagecontact.

A mechanism towards language shift is the adoption of code-switching or borrowing where the mother tongue co-exists and is used in conjunction with certain words or phrases from another language to aid understanding, maintain fluency, indicate social standing, or when there is no natural alternative. Myers-Scotton suggests that ‘... in a living community the borrowing is asymmetrical: the [language] flow is mainly from the socio-linguistically dominant language to the other one’ (1992:34). Most languages adopt these phenomena and in an age of global interaction, population and trade migration, the idea of a ‘pure’ language is increasingly improbable. Another stage within the gradual process of shift may be the development of a ‘hybrid’ language using morphology from the dominant language and lexicon from the mother language which is more easily retained due to its relative saliency. Trudgill (1977) regards this as part of the process of language ‘simplification’ or ‘reduction’. The adoption of an official *lingua franca* (often at the expense of the ethnic language) as the modern inter-ethnic means of communication is a definitive, often political, institutional stance on language. Language shift can also generate degrees of bi- or multilingualism where two or more languages are used side-by-side depending on the situation, the interlocutors and the social domain. This is an additive procedure, where two or more languages coexist. A subtractive procedure of language shift results in the linguistic space being occupied by a more dominant tongue. This is language death.

There are many other questions to which no obvious answers are at present available: to what extent is it possible to generalize and theorize concerning language death? Given the vastly varying circumstances that may lead to language death, Hamp (1989:7), (perhaps echoing Guilleron’s famous dictum in dialect geography – ‘*chaque mot a son histoire*’) urges caution and reticence - ‘every case is special ... idiosyncratic’. What, for instance, is the relationship between pidginization and languages in the terminal stages of

decline? Are the kinds of changes dying languages undergo predictive of language death? Do features of language death represent a reversal of the processes of language acquisition, what is learned later by the child being lost earlier, or never mastered, by the semi-speaker? As cases of language death are in anything but short supply and the field is burgeoning, it is likely that these questions may soon be clarified.

1.5. The Celtic languages in jeopardy

Among the world's endangered languages, the Celtic family are collectively facing an uncertain future, having been in continuous retreat for over 1500 years. The Celts were one of the great barbarian *ethnoi* of the Ancient World, dominating Western and Central Europe, making incursions into Italy and Greece, colonizing central Anatolia, and even fighting as mercenaries in Egypt. Their linguistic unity was occasionally remarked on: Tacitus notes the similarity of the Gaulish and British languages, and St Jerome states that Galatian reminded him of the Gaulish dialect of the Treveri in the Rhineland (Clackson 2015: 68). The Celts spread their language and culture rapidly and just as rapidly retreated. It is the misfortune of the Celtic family to have come into close contact with two voracious imperial languages, first Latin and then English.¹⁴ The Celtic-speaking populations of Spain, Gaul and northern Italy came under the sway of Rome before the fall of the Republic and eventually assimilated to Latin, although pockets survived, Galatian and Brythonic and its offshoots being cases in point. Irish, Manx and Scots Gaelic remained vital and viable languages throughout the millennium following Roman collapse, decline only setting in with the advent of the centralized state and capitalism. Celtic is now, in terms of numbers of speakers at least, a minor branch on the Indo-European tree, confined largely to the Atlantic margins of the British Isles and with no more than a precarious foothold in Brittany. Only certain quirks

¹⁴The fate of the Celtic languages have been discussed at length by authors such as Durkacz (1983), who deals predominantly with education and religion, Abalain (1989), in French only, and Fishman (1991).

of geography seem to have prevented or postponed total encroachment. In the era of satellite television, islands and uplands offer precarious asylum. Speakers of Celtic languages have consistently failed to develop any corporate resistance to the erosion of their languages. As Greene remarks:

‘The Celtic languages are not dead, since at least two million people speak one or other of them as their native tongue, but since none of them has succeeded in dominating a state, the vast majority of their speakers are perforce bilingual, and bilingualism under those conditions must inevitably lead to the loss of the less important language.’ (Greene 1964: 33)

Sixty years later, Celtic speakers continue to dwindle, in spite of much (albeit passive) goodwill and institutional support. There are few if any monolinguals, and not only have the Celtic languages failed to dominate a state, they have failed to dominate a single urban centre of more than about 10,000 inhabitants (Carnarvon in Wales). The population (c.12,000) of Stornoway in Lewis, one of the largest and westernmost of the Hebridean islands and traditionally the stronghold of Scottish Gaelic, is almost wholly anglophone. French official policy of linguisticide towards Breton, a language which within living memory could boast over a million speakers and learnt today by perhaps only a few thousand children, looks certain to be successful. In Ireland, a Celtic language has for the first time been state-sponsored, yet the country’s legislative attempts to stem the tide by protecting and fostering Irish-speaking areas and introducing Gaelic as a compulsory subject in schools, have been a failure. Gaulish, Galatian, Lepontic, Hispano-Celtic, Cumbric and British, are all extinct. Welsh, Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Breton may follow them in this century.¹⁵ Their advocates may aspire to a societal and functionally differentiated diglossia, or permanent bilingualism, but this would depend on a continuance of

¹⁵ Already there have appeared tentative obituaries, as the titles of Adler (1977) and Hindley suggest: *Welsh and other dying languages in Europe* and *The Death of the Irish Language: A Qualified Obituary*.

domains for each variety. This condition is not met in any of the countries in which Celtic languages are spoken. As Greene (1981: 8) gloomily observes, ‘the whole history of the Neo-Celtic languages suggests that to choose bilingualism is to choose the road to decay and extinction.’¹⁶

This study focuses on the best recorded of the defunct languages, Manx and Cornish and the attempts made to revive them. In many ways they may be said to be harbingers of the fate awaiting the remaining members of the family. The conditions of and pressures towards language contraction are substantially the same. By way of illustration, a sketch of one of these is offered in the following section. In part this is a descriptive narrative of language shift over space and time but it also addresses some of the causal factors involved in language death.

1.5.1.Scottish Gaelic

Scottish Gaelic is spoken by less than 58,000 people, according to the 2011 census (National Records of Scotland 2013), 1.2 percent fewer than in 2001. The language was once spoken over most of what is modern-day Scotland, but its fortunes began to decline in the eleventh century with the arrival of English refugees at the Scottish court and in the following century with the adoption of Norman French as a High language; language shift was further precipitated by an emerging divide between the more urbanised, largely Anglophone Lowlands and the mountainous Gaelic-speaking Highlands. Since the fourteenth century, Gaelic has been primarily associated with the

¹⁶ It may be retorted that there is often no choice involved: language shift may be gradual, unconscious and involuntary. Where there is choice, it is usually to the individual’s advantage to choose bilingualism. Not to do so, in the case of the Celtic languages, is to tolerate self-segregation. Greene himself reports that language activists find themselves in much the same situation as the earnest ecologist who asks the people of some area of natural beauty not to permit development there, and is met with the reply: ‘you can’t eat the view’ (1981: 5). As will be argued later, in the context of language revival, there is often a primitivist nostalgia at work which would have native speakers spurn the twentieth century, hoarding their spiritual riches whilst disregarding material well-being.

Highlands and has not played any significant role in the affairs of the Lowland south. The heartland of present-day Gaeldom lies in the Hebrides. Gaelic speakers were actively repressed by governments in Edinburgh and in London in the wake of the Jacobite Rebellions, and during the Highland Clearances in Scotland (1792–1886) whole communities of Gaelic speakers in the Highlands were forcibly removed from their homes and driven to emigrate. In the mid-eighteenth century the population of Scotland was around 1.25 million, consisting of about 300,000 Gaelic speakers, and nearly one million English speakers, concentrated in the Lowlands.

Poverty and underdevelopment in the Highlands, and especially in the Hebrides accelerated emigration from Gaelic-speaking communities. Those who stayed in the Highlands were affected by the emergence of English as the language of the economy; the young were encouraged to learn English so as to have the option of emigrating later in order to find work. Gaelic also suffered as a result of education policy. The Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge sought to provide education for Highlanders, whose native tongue was often Gaelic. The SSPCK gradually started teaching an increasing number of lessons in English.

The 1872 Education Act made no provision for Gaelic and its use was actively discouraged within the education system; even as late as the 1930s children could be physically punished in school for speaking the language (MacKinnon 1974: 55). At the beginning of the twentieth century, the percentage of Gaelic speakers was a little more than five percent; over the course of the century, this number fell to a little more than one percent of the population. Active suppression and a long-standing association with poverty and backwardness had combined to undermine the prestige of the language in the Gaelic-speaking heartlands to the extent that in the period 1950 to 1970, Gaelic was rapidly being replaced by English at the community and family levels in the Western Isles and Skye.

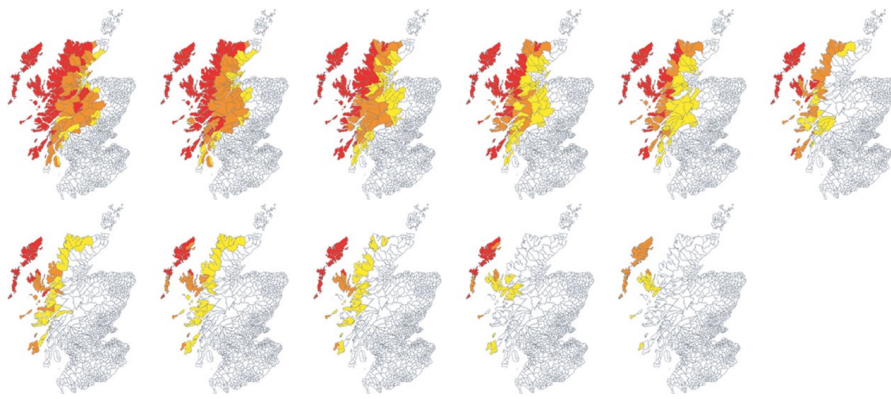
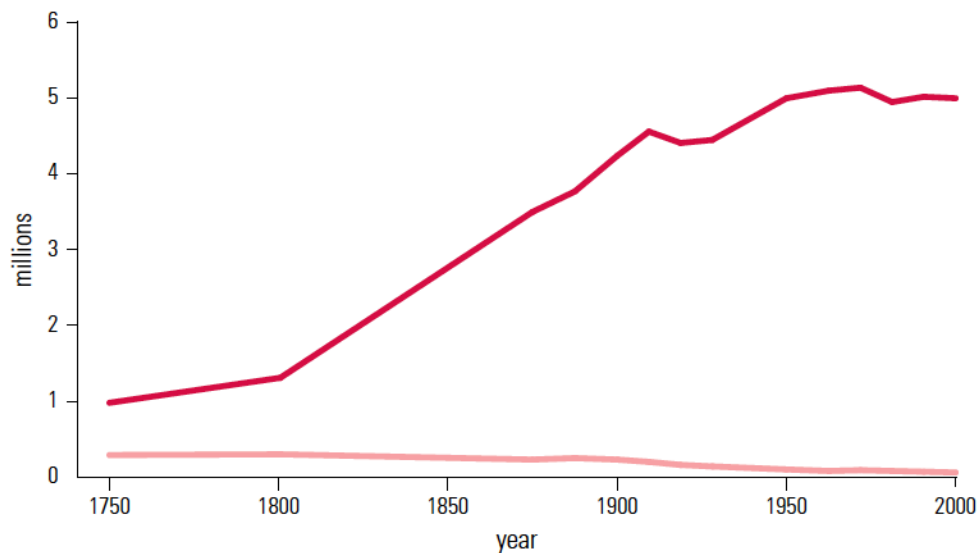


Figure 5: Percentages of Gaelic speakers (mono- and bilingual) in Scotland in successive census years, 1891–2001 (Kandler et al. 2010)

By the end of the twentieth century, significant revitalization efforts were underway, predominantly in terms of the H(igh) functions of language use. In 2005, the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act was passed. This act was modelled on the Welsh Language Act of 1993 and for the first time made Gaelic an official language of Scotland and also invested the *Bòrd na Gàidhlig* [the Gaelic language board] with responsibilities for coordinating the promotion of Gaelic culture, language and education in Scotland.



Speakers of English only Gaelic speakers (mono and bi-lingual)

Figure 6: The demographic decline of Scottish Gaelic

The establishment of the national Gaelic radio station, BBC *Radio nan Gaidheal*, in 1985, and the establishment of limited national digital Gaelic television station, BBC Alba, in 2008 secured the language's presence in mass media. Notwithstanding these advances, however, the vitality of the language remains dubious at the family and community levels. Mac an Tàilleir, Rothach and Armstrong's (2010) study of the core Gaelic-speaking community of Shawbost on the Isle of Lewis (see chapter 2), found that intergenerational transmission of the language had all but ceased and that community use of the language was weak and declining. These are prodromal symptoms. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Scottish Gaelic is being nudged inexorably towards the precipice that Dorian (1981) identified as 'tipping point'.

Chapter 2 :Language Revitalization

2.1 Terminology

The terminology is various and differently nuanced but the practice essentially the same. Language revitalization, language revival and language reclamation all refer to ‘the phenomenon of attempting to bring endangered languages back to some level of use within their communities (and elsewhere) after a period of reduction in usage’ (Hinton 2011: 291). Bentahila and Davies (1993: 357) define the term revival as covering ‘all organised efforts to strengthen the position of a relatively weak, endangered or apparently dead language’. Spolsky (2003) prefers the term regeneration for efforts which focus on broadening domains of use.

The term reclamation implies the revindication of societal or familial rights: either a form of decolonization, especially where a language has been prohibited or suppressed, as for example in the Basque Country, or the acquisition of language spoken ancestrally but not transmitted by immediate forebears. However, even attempts to reframe such efforts in positive terms and to empower participants may be criticised, e.g. by Leonard (2012), who claims that ‘reclamation’ programmes evoke an essentialist notion of culture whereby participants feel pressure to act, think or speak in certain ways, particularly those that are deemed to be ‘traditional’.

Language maintenance, on the other hand, presupposes a certain degree of vitality, inasmuch as the language is still being acquired by young speakers, but it is in need of support. For the robust intervention required for languages with no speakers, the term language resuscitation is occasionally used. Such languages tend not to be acknowledged, by activists at least, as having died but merely to be ‘dormant’ or ‘sleeping’, presumably because the adjectives ‘dead’ or ‘extinct’ imply a bleak and irrevocable finality that might prove prejudicial to the outcome of whatever revivalist measures are implemented.

Over the past sixty years and with increasing frequency, innovative programmes have appeared around the world with the aim of revitalizing languages that are at risk of disappearing due to diminishing numbers of native speakers. These initiatives vary as greatly as the languages that are their targets. In some instances, they are nearly national in scope, and involve language planning initiatives at governmental level, such as the efforts to preserve Irish; in other cases they involve bottom-up, grassroots-level activities on the part of small communities or even groups of motivated individuals.

Revitalization, as a general phenomenon, is in the ascendant and has become an issue of global proportions given that there are now hundreds of endangered languages, and there are few regions of the world where urgent attempts at language revitalization are not underway. As mentioned in the previous chapter, language death and moribundity, that is, children ceasing to learn a language are occurring at an exceptionally rapid rate.

The sheer numbers of threatened languages cannot alone explain the ever-expanding number of language revitalization initiatives. It reflects too an increasing recognition of the rights of minorities, both as individuals and as groups, within the modern nation-state. Far from being suppressed in the interests of the overarching State, cultural difference is now vigourously defended, and as a consequence in many places ethnic groups and minorities have increased scope to pursue their own political agendas and defend territorial, political, and cultural rights. For instance, Article 5 of UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity affirms: 'All persons should therefore be able to express themselves and to create and disseminate their work in the language of their choice, and particularly in their mother tongue; all persons should be entitled to quality education and training that fully respect their cultural identity'. Similar statements can be found in declarations from many transnational organizations, such as the European Union. Such proclamations have encouraged ethnic communities around the world to pursue activities that assert their cultural identities, and

these activities often include programmes to promote heritage language use.

2. 2. Language vitality

Assessing and understanding language vitality is a complex enterprise, as a large number of interconnected factors enter into it, yet degree of language vitality is the basic indicator used in determining the appropriate type of language revitalization programme. A language spoken by several thousand individuals on a daily basis does not presents the same set of options for revitalization as a language that has a handful of native speakers who rarely use it. In addition, assessing changes in language vitality over time provides the most straightforward measure of success for attempts to revitalize a threatened language.

As interest among linguists in issues of language endangerment has increased over the last two decades or so, a number of different studies have arisen focusing on how to assess language vitality. One of the most comprehensive arose from the collaboration of linguists in UNESCO's Ad Hoc Group on Endangered Languages. They have collaborated on a document entitled *Language vitality and endangerment* (UNESCO 2003), which details nine factors involved in language vitality. The UNESCO Ad Hoc Group stresses that the factors need to be considered in conjunction with one another. The particulars of each individual language situation will mean that some of the factors will be more relevant than others.

Factor 1: Intergenerational language transmission

Factor 2: Absolute number of speakers

Factor 3: Proportion of speakers within the total population

Factor 4: Trends in existing language domains

Factor 5: Response to new domains and media

Factor 6: Materials for language education and literacy

Factor 7: Governmental and institutional language policies, including official status and use

Factor 8: Community members' attitudes toward their own language

Factor 9: Amount and quality of documentation

The first three factors are concerned with the numbers of speakers of a language, as well as their distribution across generations and throughout the population. Factors 4–7 identify how and where the language is used. Factor 8 concerns perceptions about the value of a language by its speakers and Factor 9 identifies the material that has been produced about or in a language. There is an obvious interdependency. Factor 5, for example, 'response to new domains and media', is very much dependent upon Factor 9, 'community attitudes'.

For assessment purposes, the fundamental question for vitality is the size and composition of the speaker population. Intuitively, the larger the number of native speakers of a language, the more likely it is to be maintained and remain healthy (Factor 2). However, a large number of speakers does not guarantee vitality because speaker population must be considered in relation to other speech communities. For example, Catalan would appear to be a relatively "safe" language enjoying considerable institutional support, yet its use is minimal among the million or so Spanish-speaking immigrants in Catalonia. Therefore, absolute speaker numbers, though an important demographic, are not a good diagnostic for determining the vitality of a language.

At least equally significant is the percentage of the total population who can speak the target language (Factor 3); language shift is indicated if a large percentage of the (ethnic) population speaks a language other than the local language. This does not mean people speaking one or more languages in addition to the local language; multilingualism is a reality for much of the world. Rather, Factor 3 is concerned with the percentage of the community which does or does not know the local language. The higher the percentage for a particular area, the greater the vitality of the language.

Intergenerational transmission (Factor 1) is typically and rightly used as a benchmark for whether a language will maintain its vitality into the indefinite future. In the broad terms, three types of situations can be found. In the first, all generations, including children, have fluent use of the language. In the second, the language is used by parents and grandparents but not the children, although the children may have a passive competence in the language; and in the third category, only the grandparents/elder generation would maintain knowledge of the language. This kind of characterization clarifies the issue of intergenerational transmission and highlights the basic fact that reasonable expectations of long-term use depend on children acquiring the language. For a language to be vital, it must be actively used by that younger generation.

An influential alternative terminology was that introduced by Fishman (1991): Reversing Language Shift (RLS), which aims to restore intergenerational transmission. This in turn is reliant on establishing the actual level of endangerment of a language expressed by a scale which captures language vitality, as determined by the proportion of speakers across generations, by language use, and by domains of usage. Grenoble and Whaley (2006: 18) propose a six-way distinction: **safe, at risk, disappearing, moribund, nearly extinct, and extinct.**

Safe: all generations use the language in all or nearly all domains, and the language has a large speaker base relative to others spoken in the same region. A safe language usually has official status, and typically functions as the language of government, education, and commerce. Safe languages generally enjoy high prestige.

At risk: there is no observable pattern of a shrinking speaker base, but the language lacks some of the properties of a safe language: it may be used in limited domains, or have a smaller number of speakers than other languages in the same region. Language attitudes may be key at this stage: positive attitudes toward the language may foster vitality, while negative attitudes may contribute to shift.

Disappearing: a language is disappearing when there is an observable shift towards another language in the communities where it is spoken. With an overall decreasing proportion of intergenerational transfer, the speaker base shrinks because it is not being replenished. Disappearing languages are consequently used in a more restricted set of domains, and languages of wider communication begin to replace them in a greater percentage of homes.

Moribund: the language is no longer transmitted to children, and so the speaker base is consistently shrinking.

Nearly extinct: only a handful of speakers of the oldest generation remain.

Extinct: no remaining speakers.

Fishman offers his own typology of threatened languages, for which he uses the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), consisting of eight stages that correlate with the eight phases of language shift reversal. These progress in reverse order, from the worst case scenario, Stage 8, to the full achievement of language revitalization represented by Stage 1. Fishman describes the criteria of each stage in detail but also gives clear and practical recommendations about the language planning process related to each particular stage (Fishman 1991: 88–114).

The main purpose of the GIDS is to allow priorities and recommendations to be formulated for each of the stages.

Stage 8 on the GIDS scale describes a critical juncture for a threatened language: ‘most vestigial users of Xish (Fishman’s designation of the threatened language, its speakers are labelled as Xmen, while the majority language is referred to as Yish and its speakers Ymen) are socially isolated members of the older generation. In these cases Xish is sometimes used to address their pets, photographs or other treasured objects but the language is no longer used as a means of communication and needs to be re-assembled from their mouths and memories and taught to demographically

unconcentrated adults' (Fishman 1991: 88). This stage implies that the task of RLS is to document the threatened language by collecting material such as folk tales, jokes, proverbs greetings, blessings, etc., and recording them in audio and written format in order later to attempt to restore the vocabulary and grammar of the language. As an RLS remedial measure at this stage Fishman suggests the introduction of language courses for the adult members of the Xish community.

Stage 7 on the GIDS scale: 'most users of Xish are a socially integrated and ethnolinguistically active population but they are beyond child-bearing age' (Fishman 1991: 89). The children and grandchildren of these Xish-speaking people have already abandoned their traditional language and are Yish-speaking. At this stage, it is possible to teach the threatened language and culture to the younger speakers, including adults of child-bearing age, and encourage them to speak in this language to their children. The goal of the RLS efforts is to re-establish the intergenerational transmission of Xish. Thus all RLS activities that do not support this goal must be considered as a failure from the point of view of the revival movement. The minority community should engage in establishing young people's associations, young parent groups and residential communities or neighbourhoods that use Xish (Fishman 1991: 92).

At the next stage, **Stage 6**, Xish is used in informal communication among all three generations of the minority community, even though the majority language prevails in the formal domains. Stage 6 is 'the attainment of intergenerational informal oralcy and its demographic concentration and institutional reinforcement'. This be achieved through the establishment of Stage 7 institutions in neighbourhoods with higher numbers of Xish speakers or 'at least, frequently scheduled, and cognitively/emotionallygripping, briefer concentrations for outings and vacations' (Fishman1991: 92).In the absence of any demographic concentration of Xish speakers, Fishman suggests scheduled visits, the use of regular telephone conferences, amateur or local radios, the exchange of

various language learning material such as games, songs, stories, letters and the establishment of parents associations (Fishman 1991: 94-95). In order to facilitate RLS-activities, families raising their children in Xish should be supported by RLS family centres. (Fishman 1991: 94). Stage 6 is crucial in language revitalisation since the threat of immediate language death is dispelled when its prerequisites are fulfilled. According to Fishman, most of the intergenerationally transmitted languages in the world are precisely at this stage, and therefore, it is essential that it should be properly secured by as further success at advanced stages depends on it.

The primary focus of the next stage, **Stage 5**, is ‘Xish literacy in home, school and community, but without taking on extra-communal reinforcement of such literacy’ (Fishman 1991: 95). Literacy leads to the widening of the already achieved functional domains of Xish through usage in newspapers, magazines, books, brochures, etc. It enhances the prestige of the minority language through visibility and connects geographically distant families through aiding interpersonal and intercommunal communication liberated from reliance on the majority language.

Together Stages 8 to 5 constitute the minimum basis of reversing language shift. **Stage 4** on the GIDS scale envisages partial control of the primary level of education on the part of the minority language community. Two types of school are distinguished (Fishman 1991: 99-101) at this phase. Type 4a schools follow the Yish authority’s requirements as to what is adequate and expected in education, but are mainly under Xish control and facilitate children’s integration into the Xish culture and society, while type 4b schools are funded entirely out of the general tax funds and the Yish authorities exercise their own control over the requirements of education and allow some of the subjects to be taught in Xish.

Stage 3 on the GIDS scale: ‘use of Xish in the lower work sphere (outside of the Xish neighbourhood /community) involving interaction between

Xmen and Ymen' (Fishman 1991: 103). Xish is already present at workplaces situated within the minority community at earlier stages, but at this stage it leaves the protective ethnocultural and ethnolinguistic boundaries of the minority group and is introduced into the work environment in two situations. Companies of type 3a are mainly Xish controlled and staffed and seek to fulfil the needs of the Yish market, while 3b companies are the converse, oriented towards Xish clients and providing services in the Xish language. Given the dominance of Yish in the work sphere, this stage of RLS may be difficult to achieve and require the thorough consolidation of the presence of Xish at Stages 6-4. **Stage 2** represents an advanced stage in language revitalization.: Xish is present in 'in lower governmental services and mass media but not in the higher spheres of either' (Fishman 1991: 105). For this stage to be attained, the Xish community must have sufficient authority to participate in decision-making on the governmental level and exercise some control over the mass media, so that programmes are broadcast or dubbed in Xish. Government services are offered in both Xish and Yish and bilingual forms available in their offices (Fishman 1991: 106).

Stage 1 on the GIDS scale envisages 'Xish in higher level educational, occupational, governmental and media efforts' (Fishman 1991: 107). Languages that have reached the final stage, Stage 1, are well represented in higher level education and mass media and are widely used by social and governmental organizations, as well as in other services and occupations but the additional safety provided by political independence is absent. At this stage the Xish community has the power to monitor the usage of Xish and enjoys cultural autonomy. However, arrival at Stage 1 does not signal the end of RLS. Given the political nature of this stage, the Xish community must closely follow every action that influences the well-being of Xish. Fishman enjoins "eternal watchfulness" as the price that must be paid at Stage 1 (Fishman 1991: 108).

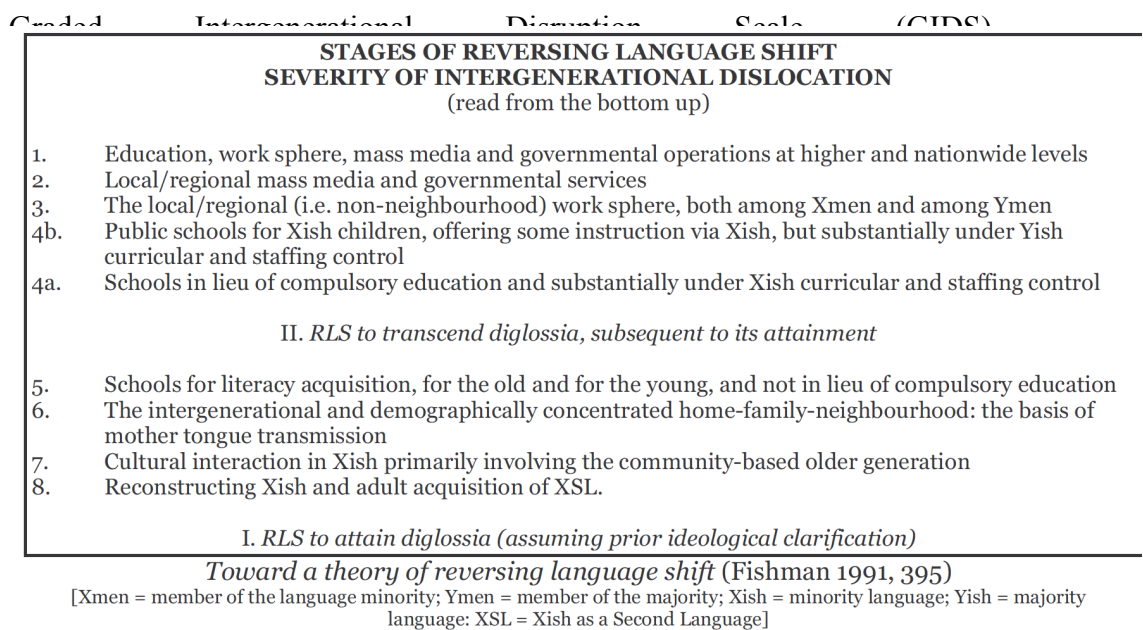


Figure 7

Provisional scheme of Fishman's approach to language revitalisation

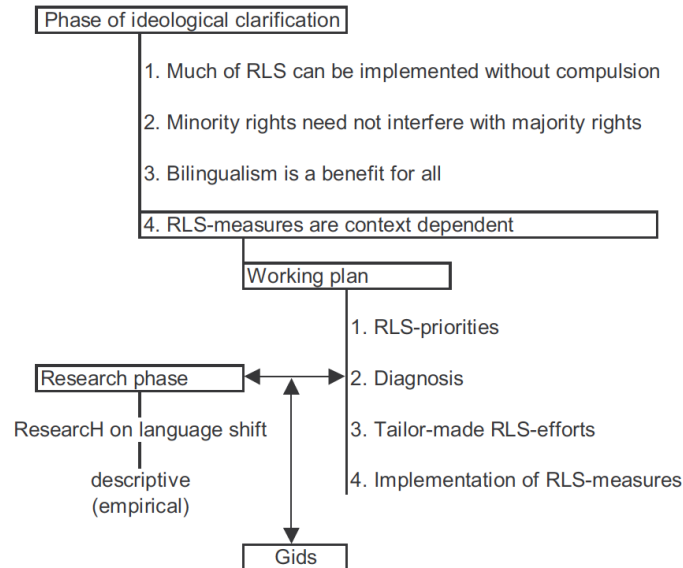


Figure 8.

2.3. Domains of Use

A fundamental concept in the GIDS scale is that of domain. In cases of

language attrition, a language is used in fewer and fewer settings with fewer and fewer functions (and, usually, by fewer and fewer speakers). As this suggests, the relationship between language and domains is a dynamic one for many local languages, and thus the trends of change are relevant. If a language is used in increasingly fewer domains, as was the case in Cornish and Manx, it is a sign of atrophy and diminishing vitality. Conversely, an increasing number of domains betokens renewed vitality.

New domains are often created in the modern world with the emergence of new technologies and media. This usually requires extension of the lexicon through borrowing or neologism. Local languages have been used in radio broadcasts around the world, far fewer in television broadcasts, and virtually none at all in major films. Radio and television broadcasting in dominant languages has been described as contributing to language shift away from lesser-used or minority languages (Grenoble and Whaley 1998: 53). While the Internet might potentially supply a creative way to increase local language use (indeed, many revitalization efforts see it in exactly this way), the fact remains that the Internet, thus far, is overwhelmingly dominated by a small number of languages. Therefore, it is a often difficult matter to establish it as a domain for local languages. Even if some web-sites are created which employ a local language, speakers of the local language will tend to make greater use of the Internet in a non-local language. Thus, the presence of a language in any given domain does not itself guarantee vitality. Recent work, however, on minority language broadcasting has stressed the potentially beneficial effects of using electronic mediation for the maintenance and renewal of such languages.¹⁷ Speakers are not only presented with opportunities to hear and maintain skills in the language, but when language is thus viewed as part of the contemporary world and relevant for the future, its value is enhanced. Digital technology has an obvious application too in the phase of documentation of an obsolescent

¹⁷ The Irish revival has been supported since the 1970s by radio and television services in the Irish language. *Raidio na Gaeltachta* and *Teilifís na Gaeilge* (now TG4) broadcasts can be seen and heard nationally.

language, providing ‘richer and multidimensional records especially in the fields of phonology and prosody, as well as in performative and interactional contexts of use as compared to print media’ (Eisenlohr 2004:23).

A critical though not uncontroversial domain for language usage is of course education. In regions where a nationally (or regionally) administered education system exists, the languages of education become a key determinant of language use in other domains. ‘When mandatory schooling occurs exclusively in a national language, the use of local languages almost inevitably declines’ (Grenoble and Whaley, 2006: 10). Acceptance in schools confers a clear symbolic value on many endangered languages and is therefore often a stated goal in revitalization campaigns. It is also perceived as a means of enhancing status, prestige and perceived utility, as well as of fostering favourable educational outcomes among indigenous peoples. Many schools which purport to have local language education teach the language as a secondary subject, and the curriculum as a whole is taught in a language of wider communication, yet ‘Education in the language is *essential* for language vitality’ (UNESCO Report ‘Language Vitality and Endangerment’, 2003: 12). In the case of Manx, very modest amounts of extra-curricular teaching led gradually to incorporation into the mainstream curriculum. The Breton-immersion schools, the *Diwan* (‘seed’ in Breton), inspired by the Irish *Gaelscoileanna* and Basque *Ikastolak* movements, started as community-run playschemes with native-speaker helpers, to enable transmission to skip a generation. These ‘language nests’ are seen as a particularly successful dimension of language revitalization.

Formal schooling requires literacy in the local language, and so the extent of literacy is a further marker of language vitality. A corollary is standardization, and where a high level of local variation is present, standardization may entail the loss of dialect diversity. A divergence and even hostility may develop between younger speakers who have learnt a unified, possibly puristic, literary version of an endangered language

through education, and older native speakers of ‘authentic’ or traditional varieties (Grenoble and Whaley, 2006).

Ideally, for sustaining vitality in a local language, all subject matter needs to be taught in that language, and pedagogical materials must be available to teachers and students. This in turn requires the development of discipline-specific materials and technical terminology in the lexicon of the language. A wide range of written materials may already exist in the language, such as literature, religious texts, newspapers, textbooks, dictionaries, and so on. On the other hand, there may be a lack of literacy, no orthography, and indeed no written language at all.

Assessment of language vitality needs to take into account a complex set of interrelated factors: the size of the speaker community, intergenerational transmission, domains of language use, and attitudes on a variety of levels. Of the four, the one factor that tends to be paramount is intergenerational transmission: once the children stop learning a language, its fate is sealed. In cases of rapid or accelerated language shift, disrupted transmission to children can propel a vital language to near extinction in the course of a single generation. The time of life when people are able to transmit a language to their children may also be the period when they are turning their backs on the old culture, or preoccupied in perfecting their skills in the dominant language for economic or educational reasons. Realization of imminent collapse often takes place too late to raise children speaking the ancestral language. The immediate task for revitalization programmes is to identify and stabilize languages under threat so that they can be transmitted to the next generation in as many of their functions as possible. The sooner such programmes are implemented, the easier it is to reverse the shift. The following two examples illustrate the hazards of late intervention.

2.4. Two Celtic case studies

2.4. .1. The Gaeltacht in The Republic of Ireland

Sanskrit is among the twenty-two Scheduled languages of India. In the Indian census of 2001, 14,135 people reported Sanskrit as their native language. Similarly, the Irish language is the first official language of the Republic of Ireland, with English recognized as the second official language. Results of the 2011 Census show that 41.4 percent of the population reported an ability to speak Irish. Given, however, that much of the efforts to revitalize the Irish language have centred on the education system, it would be unsurprising if it was confined mainly to this context. Daily use of Irish outside of the education system is limited to just 1.8 percent of the population; just 2.6 percent reported using Irish on a weekly basis. In spite of widespread theoretical support for the language actual use remains low. By the early twentieth century, Irish was already on the wane, spoken by less than a fifth of the population and its heartland, confined almost entirely to a western periphery, populated by agricultural smallholders and fishing families, comprising an economically depressed and vulnerable community subject to heavy emigration. This is the unpromising situation which the Gaelic League and then the newly formed Irish state inherited and sought to remedy throughout the twentieth century. The Gaelic League, established under Douglas Hyde in 1892, infused the language revival with a political dimension. Influenced by German Romanticism, in which the ethnic identity arising from an organic association of a language with a particular place and people was central, the League emphasized Ireland's unique cultural identity vis-a-vis that of England, providing the rationale for why Irish should be restored, a rationale that has come under scrutiny only recently.¹⁸

¹⁸‘If Ireland really is to become a multicultural society, then the Irish language can no longer function as a badge of identity for just one section of the community, those who claim descent from from putative Gaelic ancestors’ (Doyle 2015: 267).

One of the enduring legacies of the Gaelic League is the *Gaeltacht* (plural, *Gaeltachtaí* meaning roughly ‘Gaeldom’), conceived originally as an linguistic equivalent of a nature reserve, an area of rugged countryside, untouched by the forces of modern industrialization, where Irish speakers could eke out a frugal existence untroubled by the language of the *Gall* (foreigners). The natives, however, were not always either compliant or grateful. One commentator, Hindley (1990: 212) is scathing in his appraisal:

I sense that by 1922 (and probably by 1893) Irish had become the key distinguishing feature of a Gaeltacht subculture which was also the anti-culture of an underclass in relation to anglicized Irish middle-class society. In this it resembles broad Cockney in east London. Its speakers still do not regard it as ‘respectable’ but it shows their independence of middle-class values and ‘high’ culture, bringing a sense of integrity and collective privacy which ‘Gaeltacht chauvinism’ reflects. ... This is not incompatible with a sense of shame about it ... but the language is their ovm possession, it is part of themselves, and there is a deep psychological ‘class-war’ element in their resentment of and resistance to its appropriation by (to them) ‘upper-class’ outsiders What has happened in the course of the attempted revival is that a section of the anglicized upper class ... has adopted the lower class patois. The lower-class reaction is exactly what would have been expected in London if the West End ‘toffs’ of the 1920s had presumed to combine with their ‘slumming’ improving lectures on the virtues and desirability of maintaining Cockney English, and then went on to try and talk it, finally offering instruction to the Cockneys on how they should talk it ‘correctly’.

As is commonly the case with the Celtic revivals, a breach was created between the middle-class intellectuals who opted for Irish as an extension of their nationalist personae and the illiterate peasantry to whom they preached the gospel of cultural and linguistic renewal. In the present day, it is not uncommon to encounter resentment on the part of Irish speakers to outsider language revivalists and linguists, who are viewed with suspicion

since, in a sense, it is not their (Irish's) battle. The mutual incomprehension was not merely ideological. Irish still lacks a standard language which is accepted and used by the majority of the population in public and formal communication (Doyle 2015:222). There is a government-defined official standard (the *Caighdeán*). The fragmented *Gaeltacht* regions each have their respective dialects but the standard does not really approximate to any of them, so native speakers tend to avoid it as "artificial". The *Gaeltachtaí* are fairly widely spaced from one another, so there is little inter-*Gaeltacht* interaction and no one dialect enjoys prestige over others. Doyle (2015:222) comments that 'by and large the Irish of the Gaelic Leaguers tended to be bookish, and their pronunciation left a lot to be desired; native speakers generally lacked the patience and flexibility that would have enabled them to speak in such a way that the learners might have understood. This meant that one of the ideological planks of the Revival, namely that the *Gaeltacht* was to function as a source for the reinstatement of Irish as the national tongue, presented considerable practical challenges to all but the most linguistically talented'.

Successive Irish governments have relied on the maintenance of the native speaker heartlands to save Irish. But there has been drastic contraction, leaving only three main *Gaeltacht* areas in Donegal, Connemara, and West Kerry, all relatively remote communities on the Atlantic seaboard. Their viability had been jeopardized by poverty and emigration, so that financial incentives (the *deontas*) were provided to induce the Irish speakers to stay. The government was also committed to promoting rural industry. Responsibility for the economic, social and cultural development of the *Gaeltacht* passed to *Údarás na Gaeltachta* in 1980.

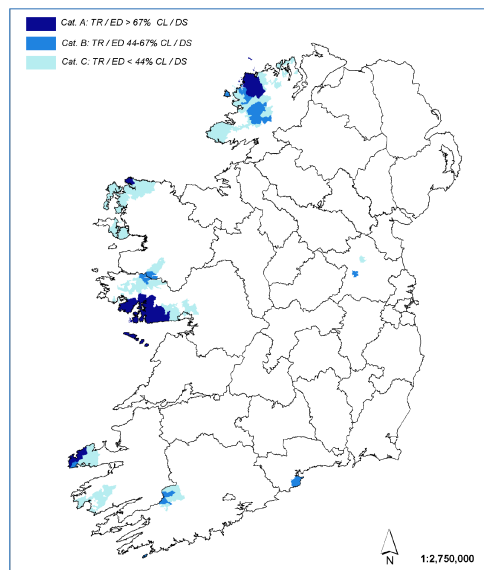


Figure 9: The Three (reclassified) Gaeltacht Areas

At present over 7,000 people are employed full time in enterprises supported by Údarás and investment has retarded migration. In fact, from 78,000 in 1961, the population has risen to just over 100,000 in 2011 (Central Statistics Office, 2014). A unwelcome corollary, however, is that such enterprises are unable to flourish in a solely Irish-speaking environment. Neither the personnel, which must be suitably qualified technically, nor the language itself is adequately equipped to do so, with the result that as a Gaelic-speaking community it is under severe threat. Another factor militating against the use of Irish was that of returning former emigrants, bringing back with them non-Irish speaking partners and children. Hindley argued that such incomers were unlikely to Gaelicise without there being ‘a substantial territorial base in which Irish has unchallenged dominance’ (Hindley 1990: 143). Many emigrants of course simply do not return at all. There is also English immigration into the Gaeltacht from the tourist industry. The Gaeltacht Industrialization Agency (Údarás na Gaeltachta) opened a number of craft centres (*ceardlann*) in the Gaeltachtaí as a commercial outlet for locally traditional craftwork. Although these are primarily restricted to Irish speakers, these have have

widely attracted non-Irish-speaking artists and artisans from the rest of Ireland.

The policies devised and the measures implemented over the hundred years seem ineffectual and may, in fact, contribute to what they were supposedly designed to prevent. The first definitive results of the 2011 Census were released by the Central Statistics Office in March 2012 reveal that Irish with 82,600 people speaking it daily outside the school context is the third most used language in Ireland, behind English and the 120,000 or so who speak Polish at home. Even within the Gaeltacht areas, only a third of respondents said they speak Irish on a daily basis outside of the education system. Positive attitudes towards the language are prevalent but insufficiently matched by practice. According to Ó Giollagain et al. (2007: 26), in their government-sponsored *Comprehensive linguistic study of the use of Irish in the Gaeltacht*, a significant gap appears between their [young people's] attitudes to and abilities in Irish, on the one hand, and their use of Irish on the other. Young Gaeltacht people most often use the Irish language within their family networks and with neighbours, although it is worth noting that only *circa* one fourth of them use Irish primarily in either of these networks.' Even in the case of young people resident in Category A¹⁹ areas, only around 60 percent reported that Irish was the main language of communication in their families and with neighbours.

Without major change to language-use patterns, Irish is 'unlikely to remain the predominant community and family language in those areas with the most widespread and inclusive Irish-speaking networks (i.e. Category A Gaeltacht districts) for more than another fifteen to twenty years' (Ó Giollagain et al. (2007: 27). Nevertheless, in the obligatorily upbeat Concluding Remarks, the following nine significant positive factors are highlighted as a central pillar in support of strategies recommended for the future:

¹⁹Electoral divisions in which 67 percent of the total population (3+) are daily speakers of Irish

- The positive attitude towards the Irish language in every area, especially among the young people in the Gaeltacht.
- Relatively high levels of ability in the Irish language in the majority of the Gaeltacht areas, especially among the younger age cohorts.
- The willingness on the part of many community institutions in the various areas to carry out their work and discharge their responsibilities in accordance with the linguistic status of the Gaeltacht despite the low levels of use of Irish as a community language in some areas.
- The high levels of support different State organisations evince towards ensuring the sustainability of the Irish-speaking community.
- The broad support shown by all Governments since the foundation of the State to maintaining the Gaeltacht as a distinct linguistic community.
- The number of community and State institutions willing to foster the use of Irish in their activities and events.
- The great number of Irish speakers not of Gaeltacht origin who, as a result of the language policies of the Irish State, consider the Gaeltacht as an important element of their own cultural identity; and the solidarity shown by the people of Ireland generally to the Gaeltacht.
- The recent successes of the Irish economy have provided Ireland with sufficient resources to address the linguistic challenges outlined in this report.
- Despite the process of language shift away from Irish since the seventeenth century, Irish-speaking Gaeltacht communities remain in northwest Donegal, in south Conamara and the Aran Islands, in west Corca Dhuibhne and in northwest Erris, as do Irish-speaking networks in all of the seven current Gaeltacht counties.

The degree of success achieved by the implementation of the report's recommendations was subsequently monitored by the *Update Report to the Comprehensive Linguistic Study on the Usage of Irish in the Gaeltacht*:

2006-2011, published on 29 May 2015. The analysis in the report shows that the rate at which the Irish language is being eroded as a community language in the Gaeltacht not only has not abated but that erosion is taking place at a faster rate than was predicted in the original study. Even with the urgent intervention required, it appears that language shift has reached a tipping point in the Irish Gaeltacht and RLS strategies are powerless to arrest it.

It seems beyond dispute that in spite of an increase in the overall population, the Gaeltacht's native-speaker core continues to shrink, a fact acknowledged by the former government-appointed Irish Language Commissioner, Ronan O'Domhnaill (2014), who warned that Irish 'is in an increasingly vulnerable position in the Gaeltacht, and experts predict that its days as the main language of the home and community are numbered unless radical remedial action is taken'.

A myriad of problems have beset the Irish language and its revival. Social pressure, negative attitudes, poor planning, geographic factors, and financial concerns have all interacted to hinder the revival of the language. For many, Irish is dispised as a useless language given the economic benefits associated with English. The vitality and use of 'languages cannot be disassociated from the socioeconomic interests and activities of their speakers' (Mufwene 2004: 206). The influence of English is so widespread that it is unclear in what contexts Irish could ever be used if even a sizeable minority of the population could be convinced to become functionally bilingual. The solution may lie in monolingual communities committed to the maintenance of the language by creating environments where Irish and only Irish is used, thus ensuring transmission to the next generation, but it is difficult in the twenty-first century to envisage a community with the degree of commitment required to make an isolationist move simply to maintain or revive the language.

2.4.2. Scottish Gaelic in a Lewis Community

This prospect of near imminent collapse of a traditional enclave of Celtic speech can be exactly paralleled in the case of Scottish Gaelic. Shawbost is a village on the Island of Lewis in the Western Isles, one of the strongest ‘Gaelic-dominant’ communities in Scotland and thus a litmus test of the strength of Gaelic today. *The State of Gaelic in Shawbost: Language Attitudes* funded by the *Bòrd na Gàidhlig*²⁰, reports on a research project carried out in 2009-10. A detailed questionnaire was administered to every adult and child and fourteen interviews were conducted with individuals, and with the staff of local institutions, to get a better understanding of the context for the questionnaire results.

The following comprises a summary of the results:

Adults were asked to assess their Gaelic fluency in understanding, speaking, reading and writing Gaelic: 66percentof adults in Shawbost are fluent in Gaelic. To the question ‘Does Gaelic matter to people’s identity who live in the Western Isles?’ almost nine out of ten adults rated Gaelic as central to their identity as people living in the Western Isles and 88.7percent of adults agreed with the statement, ‘To maintain their identity, the Western Isles need their Gaelic speakers’. Furthermore, 80percentof respondents thought that children in the islands must learn Gaelic.

It was therefore concluded that Gaelic fluency levels are high, and that Shawbost residents are very supportive of speaking Gaelic and of saving the language.

²⁰ Founded in 2003, the body responsible for implementing the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act of 2005 for “securing the status of the Gaelic language as an official language of Scotland commanding equal respect to the English language”. The *Bòrd* represents a cornerstone of the Scottish Government’s implementation of their duties under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

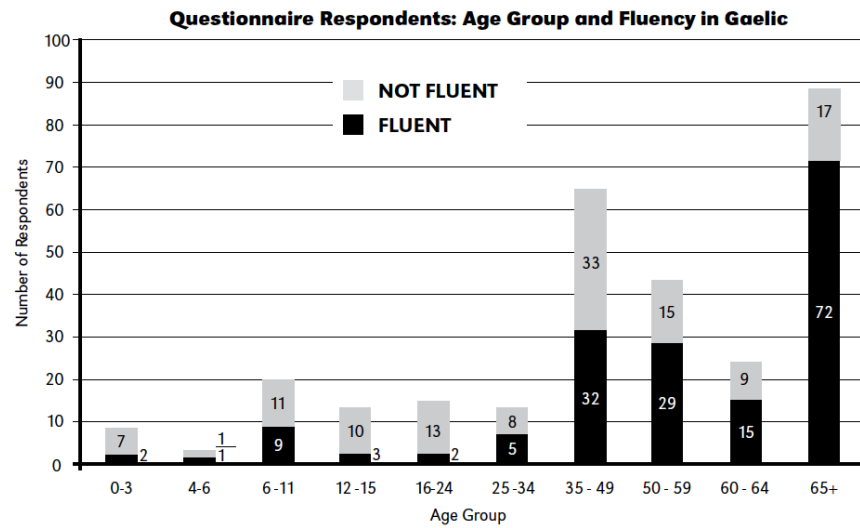


Table 1: Fluency in Gaelic In Shawbost according to age (from ‘Gaelic in Shawbost’)

However, while 66percent of Shawbost residents are fluent speakers, fluency clearly predominates only among those aged fifty and older. For children under sixteen, fluency in spoken Gaelic is very weak amongst most of the youngest age groups: (almost) one child in four speaks Gaelic fluently, and a further one child in five can speak Gaelic fluently for most subjects of conversation. The pattern of language shift patent in Table 1 in this instance could not be attributed to in-migration of non-Gaelic speakers as 84percentof residents were found to be natives of either Shawbost or the Western Isles.

Further relevant findings were as follows:

- Younger and larger households are mainly or only English-speaking. Gaelic is strongest in one or two person households, where the majority of these people are aged 50 and older.
- Only one in ten persons said that they were learning Gaelic. The main language of formal meetings and in community settings is English because only Gaelic speakers are expected to be bilingual and to use the dominant language of the majority, English (uni-directional bilingualism) .

- Although 66 percent of adult residents are fluent Gaelic speakers, only one parent in five speaks mainly or only Gaelic to their children.
- 34 out of the 39 children (87 percent) in the sample speak mainly or only English to their siblings. Five children (13 percent) use Gaelic and English equally with siblings, but no child uses mainly or only Gaelic with siblings.
- Approximately half of all grandparents speak to their grandchildren mainly or only in English, even though their generation is the most fluent and able to support the child to learn Gaelic.
- Despite bilingual education being available in Shawbost, more than half of the parents chose English Medium Education for their school-age children.

It is clear from the above that inter-generational transmission in Shawbost has broken down, whether irremediably or not remains to be seen. The authors of the report purport to contribute to a sincere dialogue between Shawbost residents and development agencies about the future of Gaelic and to that end quote Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer (2011: 63) in calling for ‘an honest assessment of the state of the language and how people really feel about using and preserving it, replacing wishful thinking and denial of reality with an honest evaluation leading to realistic recommendations’. The authors could, however, be accused of wishful thinking and denial of reality themselves in their conclusions. To the question ‘Can anything be done?’ the answer is emphatically YES:

“So, the effort will have to be huge [...] like it was in Israel when it was a new country [...] It has happened before, and it can be done” (Shawbost resident)

No language is lost or beyond hope. Even a dead language can be revived. In 1880, there were no native speakers of Hebrew,

but through the 20th century, Jews worked to revive their language, and now there are five million native speakers of Hebrew in Israel and nine million speakers globally.

Gaelic in Shawbost is definitely alive. But having a high percentage of fluent speakers and positive attitudes towards Gaelic in Shawbost are not enough: Gaelic needs to be spoken in the family home and in the community, if it is to continue.

The language development initiatives designed to forestall the endpoint of language shift are:

- introducing bilingual education for all children
- giving support to all parents in achieving bilingual households
- introducing greater opportunities to learn or relearn Gaelic
- encouraging Gaelic in the workplace through training opportunities and the valuing of Gaelic language skills in the workplace.

All of these rely on a their coming into being a collective will on the part of a community to change settled habits. Universal bilingual education cannot be imposed and parental choices are likely to depend on factors other than language acquisition.

Although Informal Intergenerational Oracy is rightly at the centre of language revitalization programmes, it is clear that once interrupted it is very difficult to restore. A more recent programme in Wales, *Twf* ('growth')²¹, recommended by the Shawbost report, encourages families to bring children up bilingually, and is promoted by midwives and health workers (Edwards and Newcombe 2005). Bilingual education had produced a generation with proficiency in academic Welsh, but without the type of language (and the motivation) needed for childrearing. Welsh revitalization has set itself ambitious goals, yet here too the project may be faltering. In

²¹ Rationale and resources may be accessed here: <http://twfcymru.com/?lang=en>

2003 the then Welsh government set a target to increase the proportion of Welsh speakers, encouraged by the 2001 Census, which showed the size of the Welsh-speaking population had increased for the first time in 100 years. Data from the 2011 Census revealed that it had not only missed its target, but that the proportion of Welsh speakers actually shrank. Instead of the five-point increase that ministers wanted, the proportion of Welsh speakers fell from 21 percent in 2001 to 19 percent. Welsh appears to have gone into reverse in a period when Welsh-medium education has increased and work has been done to cement the official status of the Welsh language.²²

The introduction of a Irish and Gaelic into the school curriculum might have seduced the authorities into believing that interrupted family transmission was no longer a problem since the schools were ensuring transmission. One of the miscalculations of the revival movement has been to place the burden on the educational system, rather than in promoting the usefulness of the language in everyday life; Irish is not used as a full, living language in the workplace in most of Ireland (thus failing the criteria for GIDS Stage 3). Research in Wales has found that although bilingual education had successfully increased the number of young people who could speak Welsh, it did not lead to renewal of inter-generational transmission: young people simply stopped speaking Welsh once they left school (Edwards and Newcombe, 2005: 137). In places where endangered languages are promoted through education, traditional domains may paradoxically be reversed: the greater the official endorsement increases, the weaker the use in informal contexts.

The case of Irish embodies the ambiguities involved in assessing language revitalization and restoration. Some would see it as evidence that language-support movements are large futile and others see as evidence that

²² Further information on the shock felt at the census setback can be obtained from ‘2011 Census: Theories on the decline in Welsh language’ <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-politics-20701119>; accessed 22 June 2014.

they can achieve a great deal. For Romainne, the revival is ‘hardly failure’ whatever the shortcomings (2008:24). Doubts about the effectiveness of language-support movements or the value of RLS efforts are most commonly expressed when ‘success’ is taken to mean that a receding language has been restored to full daily use and is now transmitted to ethnic-group children in the home. In spite of the proliferation of language-support movements, and in spite of improved language-rights legislation in a good many countries, this remains an obstinately rare outcome. As Doyle remarks (2015: 264), ‘If the touchstone of its success is whether 100 per cent of the population of Ireland is speaking Irish, then we have to say it is a spectacular failure ...After all, anybody who sets himself an impossible task is bound to fail.’

Chapter 3: The Demise of The Cornish Language

3.0 Introduction

Cases of ethno-linguistic extinction have, according to Krejci and Velimsky, been ‘extremely rare during the past thousand years’. They tend to follow ‘a pattern of three phases: a) shattering blow, b) lingering-on for several centuries, and c) late regrets among survivors’ (1981: 248).

Outside of the late Soviet Union, there are four ethnic groups alleged to conform to this pattern: the Dalmatians, the Polabian Slavs (extinct, linguistically at least, in the eighteenth century), the Pruz or Baltic Prussians, and lastly the Cornish. In the case of the Cornish, the ‘shattering blow’ is identified as their defeat at the hands of Athelstan, King of Wessex in 936.²³ Whilst the use of the dramatic expression ‘shattering blow’ may be historically inaccurate and misleading, this account follows the three phases in narrating a military, or at least political, conquest which precipitates widespread and progressive language loss. It also subjects to critical examination the peculiar Cornish manifestation of ‘late regrets among survivors’.

The county of Cornwall occupies a peninsula 120 kilometres long and 72 kilometres broad at its widest point.²⁴ It is separated from the neighbouring

²³ Krejci and Velimsky appear to derive their information from Stephans (1976: 202): ‘It was not until 936, however, that Athelstan, King of Wessex, drove the Cornish [sic] out of Exeter and defeated Hywel, the last independent king of Cornwall.’ According to Wakelin, however, this Hywel (“Huwal West Wala cyning” in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is to be identified with Hywel Dda, King of Dyfed in south-west Wales (1975: 59; see also Pearce 1978: 169). There is no evidence of any military campaign undertaken by Athelstan in Cornwall.

²⁴ Cornwall may have been a *pagus*, or separate administrative division, within the *Civitas Dumnoniorum*. The tribal name *Cornovii* is first documented in the 7th/8th century Ravenna Cosmography and by 700 their territory was known as *Cornubia* (ibid.: 203). The element *corn-* ‘horn’ may refer to the *Cornovii* as dwellers in promontory forts or, equally plausibly, inhabitants of a horn-like peninsula. Todd

county of Devon by the river Tamar. Cornish is the Brythonic Celtic language last spoken natively in the westernmost villages in the eighteenth century. Arguably, it is solely its geographical remoteness that accounts for its longevity as a Celtic language in England. In this it is analogous to Cumbric, also a Brythonic Celtic language not finally extinct (in upland Cumbria) until the early twelfth century (Jackson 1963: 73). However, whereas the remains of Cumbric amount to no more than three words and a few personal names, Cornish is preserved in a corpus of ‘a little less than 100,000 words, or the length of one modern novel’ (Price 1984: 139). It is this body of work that has made possible what is generally known as ‘the Cornish revival’, described by Combellack as ‘perhaps the only example in linguistic history of wholly defunct vernacular being successfully resuscitated’ (1978: 45). Gregor (1980: 73) concurs: ‘[The revival of Cornish] is a bold step, without parallel in the history of linguistic revivals’. Stephans quotes the Hebrew scholar Chaim Rabin: ‘The rebirth of Cornish is the only case that can reasonably be considered as a parallel to that of Hebrew’ (1976: 218). These are ambitious claims which invite serious consideration.

3.1.Early History

On the eve of the Claudian invasion of 43 CE the inhabitants of Britain south of the Clyde-Forth valley were linguistically homogeneous, speakers of a Celtic language not far removed from the Gaulish spoken on the continent. Unlike Gaulish, however, and in fact uniquely in the history of the Celtic languages, British (or Brittonic) survived intact four centuries of Roman occupation. The extent to which Latin displaced Celtic as a spoken language in the province is widely disputed (Jackson 1959: 61, Lockwood 1975: 55, Leith 1983: 15, Price 1984: 159, Frere 1987: 362-4). After a survey of Latin loan-words in British, Green (1968: 76) posits a ‘vigorous Latin speech, both Classical and vulgar, and massive bilingualism on the

(1983: 217) identifies a horned deity of fertility, cognate with the Gaulish *Cernunnus*, as a more probable origin.

part of speakers of British.’ According to Dillon and Chadwick, however, Latin ‘never gained wide currency in Britain’ (1972: 34). Hunter Blair too describes Latin as spoken only by some elements of the population, notably the governing classes, those concerned with trade, the army and administration, and the better educated town-dwellers, but ‘there can be no doubt that the population as a whole was not Latin-speaking’ (1975: 43). It is safe to assume that British remained as a ‘low language’ spoken predominantly by the rural population. As the higher domains disintegrated and the garrisons retreated in the fourth and fifth centuries, so British re-emerged as the only viable community language.

As far as the south-west peninsula is concerned, literary sources are non-existent and the archaeological remains scant. In fact, Romanization there was never more than partial and ‘Rome’s hand lay light’ (Thomas 1993: 352). The largest settlement was Exeter (*Isca Dumnoniorum*), founded around 50-55 CE as a social and administrative centre.²⁵ Further west, no mosaics, no theatres, no baths have been found (Payton 1994:51), leading some commentators to suggest that the Romans failed to conquer Cornwall at all (Todd 1987: 216). The Iron Age tribe, the Dumnonii, whose territory comprised modern Devon and Cornwall, the western parts of Somerset and fringes of Dorset, were largely undisturbed by military campaigns and their mode of life remained unchanged (Fox 1964: 148, Wakelin 1975: 48, Cunliffe 1997: 260). There was a gain, however, in political cohesion but this was lost once Roman rule broke down at the beginning of the fifth century. There ensued a era of fragmentation and instability, of petty kings and independent local dynasties, each at war with each other (Fox 1964: 169). Fleming reports the reoccupation of ancient abandoned hillforts by settlers who were culturally Romano-British but had only an ‘impoverished,

²⁵ Only one Roman fort has been identified, that of Nanstallon south of Kelly, dating from 55-65 AD. Frere (1987: 279) reports renewed Roman interest in Cornwall in the mid-third and early fourth centuries as a consequence of the new industry of pewter manufacture. Cornish tin mines had been famous since before Roman occupation.

residual version of the fourth-century material culture' (Fleming 2010: 32-3). There is evidence for a number of Irish settlements in northern Cornwall, but these do not appear to have lasted. Ironically, it precisely to this period, with the peninsula liberated from the Roman Empire and not yet under the "Saxon yoke", that the Celtic nationalists of Cornwall assign their lost Eden of independence.²⁶ It is a further irony that Cornish owes both its genesis as a separate language and more remotely, its extinction, to the same historical event, the westward expansion of the kingdom of Wessex.

The traditional date of the first large-scale incursions into Britain by Germanic settlers is the winter of 449. The older histories posit waves of British-speaking refugees driven inexorably westward into the two western peninsulas, triggering a pattern of emigration from Britain to Armorica (present-day Brittany), Asturia and Galicia, which reached their climax in the middle and second half of the sixth century, as the emergent kingdom of Wessex expanded towards the Bristol Channel (following the battle of Old Sarum in 552).

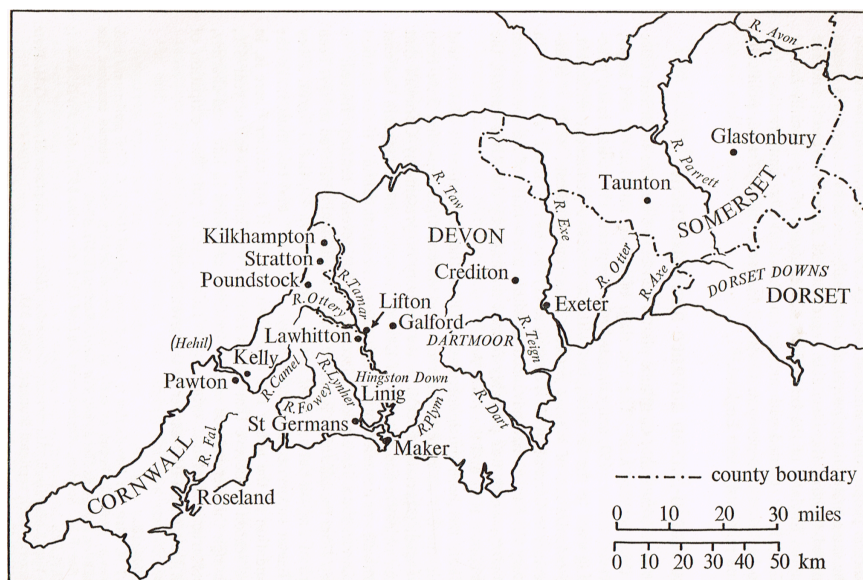


Figure 10: Anglo-Saxon Advance and Settlement (Wakelyn 1975)

²⁶ Thomas (1973: 12) allows a broader time-span: 'All its [Cornwall's] subsequent separatism and idiosyncracies, whether remarked upon externally or boasted about internally, derive from the status and development of the peninsula, in the millenium from 100 BC to AD 900.'

According to Todd (1987: 239), however, ‘it is hard to believe that the English advance westward was capable of dislodging large numbers of people in the later fifth century’ nor can Irish raids and settlements be invoked as a threat of major proportions to the security of western Britons. The character of the movement plausibly varied in the decades in which it occurred, with adventurous spirits initially looking outward in the hope of gain and advancement, followed in the sixth-century phase by larger-scale migration in search of land for settlement and exploitation.

The language of Brittany, or *Little Britain*—*Breten Vyhan*—in contrast with the *Great Britain*, was at first identical with that of Cornwall. Until the eighth century, they were ‘truly a single language’ (Todd 1987: 240) and in fact ‘no clear and accurately dateable differentiations took place ... between Cornish and Breton until the tenth and eleventh centuries (Jackson 1953: 24, 1959: 68). West British, on the other hand, the ancestor of both Welsh and Cornish, was already diverging into two dialects as early as the first century CE. The decisive break may be said to have come when the two British regions were effectively cut off from each other by land through Saxon settlement of the Severn valley following the battle of Dyrum (near Bath) in 557. By roughly 600 CE, the period when we can speak of a common British language is at an end (Jackson 1953: 25).

3. 2. Expansion of Wessex

By the middle of the seventh century the Saxons were threatening the Dumnonian boundary, located by Stenton along the rivers Parrett and Axe. The settlement of east Devon must have been complete by 670, when there is evidence to suggest that a Saxon abbey was founded at Exeter. It was here that Wynfrith (St Boniface), born at or near Crediton, received his early education c. 680-690. According to Stenton, the Saxon conquest of Devon was followed by an extensive movement of population westward from regions already settled.

The place names of Devon are essentially English, varied in character, and pointing to a rapid occupation of new territory both by aristocrats and their followers. Although Celtic place-names survived the conquest in considerable numbers, they remain as exceptions, distributed over the county in a way that shows that the English settlement was equally thorough in its eastern and western portions' (1971:64).

Wakelin interprets the same evidence but from a British perspective:

Celtic place-names, though infrequent, are to be found throughout Devon, probably indicating groups of British, e.g. Walreddon (perhaps < OE *weala-roeden* 'community of Britons'). The implications are clearly that, not only in Exeter, but throughout old Dumnonia, groups of British were allowed to live in accordance with their own ancient laws and customs (1975: 61).

This notion accords with more recent evidence provided by Fleming (2010) of an albeit attenuated continuity at the expense of a mass migration narrative. The new sense of Englishness that emerges in the sixth century is the result primarily not of conquest or colonization but rather of settlement, accommodation and acculturation.²⁷

Nevertheless, references in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the *Annales Cambriae* do show the West Saxon kings fighting sporadic battles against the shrinking kingdom of Dumnonia, and making inroads into what is now Cornwall from the early eighth century onwards. By the middle of that century Devon was fully organized as one of the shires of Wessex and the border with Dumnonia was extended beyond the Tamar as far as the Ottery-Lynher boundary. North-east Cornwall was already heavily settled, as may

²⁷Ferdinand (2013: 199) perpetuates a less nuanced, older school of historiography by referring anachronistically to the advance of 'Saxon hordes'.

be inferred from its place-names, ninety percent of which have been computed to be of English origin (Wakelin 1975: 58). The linguistic situation is lost to us, but Jackson considers it doubtful if the English ever learned much or any Brittonic:

‘... certainly they [the English] borrowed only the merest handful of words as distinct from names. Rather, the Britons must have adapted English, and there must have been a period, at least a generation, when they were bilingual.’ (1954: 66)

The history of ninth and tenth century Cornwall is obscure but native kings appear to have continued to reign. The last recorded is ‘Ricatus’ preserved in the inscription *regis ricati crux* on a cross at Penzance dated not earlier than the beginning of the tenth century. The native Cornish dynasty probably came to an end during the reign of Athelstan (924-936), who is known to have asserted his supremacy over local native kings in Britain, one of whom, Huwal, king of the West Britons and is mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. A passage in William of Malmesbury reports how Athelstan expelled the British from Exeter. It continues:

‘Having cleansed the city of its defilement by wiping out that filthy race, he fortified it with towers and surrounded it with wall of square hewn stone.’

‘Upon this passage’, comments Pearce, ‘has been erected an edifice of antiquarian speculation involving a major south-western campaign by land and sea’ (1978: 178). Some sort of political annexation would seem to be more likely. Certainly there was no massive in-migration of English speakers into west Cornwall as had occurred in Devon, and this was a vital factor in the survival of Cornish for another six hundred years. It was Athelstan who fixed the river Tamar as the shire boundary and divided the territory into hundreds on the English model. At his death ‘the whole peninsula was now virtually a province of England’ (Pearce 1978: 170).

Some idea of English settlement of Cornwall may be inferred from the place names recorded in Domesday Book, compiled in 1086. Apart from the occasional hybrid, where OE *tun* has been added to a Cornish name, English place-names in west and central Cornwall are almost negligible (Wakelin 1975: 65). In the east, however, they predominate. Predictably, the English were by far the chief landowners in the county even in the west where they were numerically weakest. Only three manors in the whole county belonged to men with Cornish names. Moreover, the manumissions recorded on the fly-leaves of the Bodmin gospels, covering the years 940-1040, reveal that of the 122 slaves who secured their freedom, 98 bore Cornish names, and twelve Latin or Biblical (Ellis 1974: 29). This would suggest that a sizeable proportion of the slave class was Cornish. With the Norman conquest, society became more complex but Cornish speakers continued to occupy the lower strata. Halliday describes twelfth century Cornwall as a county in which

Cornish was spoken by the great majority of the population, namely villeins, borders and serfs; English by the dispossessed upper classes and some of the eastern peasants; French by the Norman overlords and their officials; and Latin by the clergy (1959: 107).

As far as east Cornwall is concerned, English is likely to have been spoken more widely than Halliday is prepared to admit. Wakelin deduces from the arrested phonological development of certain Celtic place-name elements that 'about 1100, English is vastly predominant as far west as Bodmin' and that even in a good many places west of Bodmin Cornish had ceased to be spoken (1975: 76-77). There is further evidence for a linguistic frontier along a north-south axis formed by the Camel and Fowey rivers in dialectal isoglosses. South-western features such as the presence of initial voiced fricatives and *her* as subject pronoun are general in Devon and east Cornwall but rare in the west, where more standard forms argue for the later introduction of English.

In summary, Cornwall in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was ruled by an English then Norman minority living chiefly in the east but whose authority extended throughout. There was a territorial distribution of the two languages that was the product of English settlement and occupation. In the west we can posit largely monoglot coastal fishing communities and an agrarian population inhabiting a landscape whose largest settlement was the village. Cornish was already a language of low prestige, underprivileged in relation to English, French and Latin. Of the language itself not a single complete sentence is recorded. Our knowledge of it is largely confined to the 961 entries of a Latin-Cornish glossary known as the *Vocabularium Cornicum* and composed c. 1100. The manuscript initially received the Latin title *Vocabularium Wallicum* and was considered to be old Welsh. After Edward Lhuyd identification of the words as Cornish not Welsh, it received a new designation, *Vocabularium Cornicum*, and has been widely held to be a Cornish vocabulary (Ferdinand 2013: 200).

3.3. Competing Chronologies of Retreat

The loss of Cornish was essentially complete by the dawn of the eighteenth century (George 1986b: 70). There are, however, different schools of thought as to the chronology of the retreat. The main contenders are supporters of the early shift hypothesis (Wakelin 1975) and those proposing a later shift (George 1986b). Wakelin based his chronology of the adoption of English in Cornwall on place-names, Cornish and English medieval documents, and the statements of writers (Wakelin 1975: 74). The theoretical justification for using place-names is based on the premise that some of the phonological changes that occurred in the language c.1100-c.1750 can be approximately dated. He contends that some of these changes are evident in place-name orthography. In areas where the Cornish language was alive, and so still changing, he avers that place-name spelling will reflect this, by incorporating phonological changes. By contrast, in those areas where Cornish was no longer so widely used, if at all, the earlier

phonological forms would have become fossilized in their place-name spelling (ibid.: 75). Geographically, this translates roughly into an east-west divide. As illustration, he quotes extensively from C. L. Wrenn, reproduced in part here:

The decline of the Cornish language is well indicated by the forms and distribution of the word BOD 'dwelling'. In areas early anglicised, such as much of the Bodmin neighbourhood, names in BOD- persist because, there, Cornish early ceased to exist so that the name-form remained unchanged and failed to share the proper Comish development of *bod* into *bos* which took place in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Thus west Comish names occur frequently with *bos* as first element, since there the native Celtic continued to develop as a living changing language, as contrasted with the fossilized *bod*-type common in east Cornwall (Wrenn 1959, quoted in Wakelin 1975: 75).

Wakelin concludes that, by about 1100, English was prevalent as far west as Bodmin, but beyond here, there was no uniformity, with pockets of English or Cornish monoglot speakers, or bilingual communities (Wakelin 1975: 77). On the evidence of the phonological change -n(n)- > -dn-, -n > -dn, dated at c.1500, he draws the language boundary back further, with English spoken to the east and Cornish, roughly, to the west. By 1600 he estimates that Cornish was spoken only in the westernmost hundreds of Kerrier and Penwith (ibid.). He does acknowledge the limitations of place-name data, but is confident nonetheless of his conclusions (ibid.).

George (1986a) has estimated a slightly different retreat of the language, from 1200 CE until the death of the last speakers in the late eighteenth century. At the time of the 1497 rebellions, Cornish was on the verge of becoming the minority language of Cornwall and by the end of the Civil War (1642-1651), a mere fifteen percent of the population were Cornish speakers.

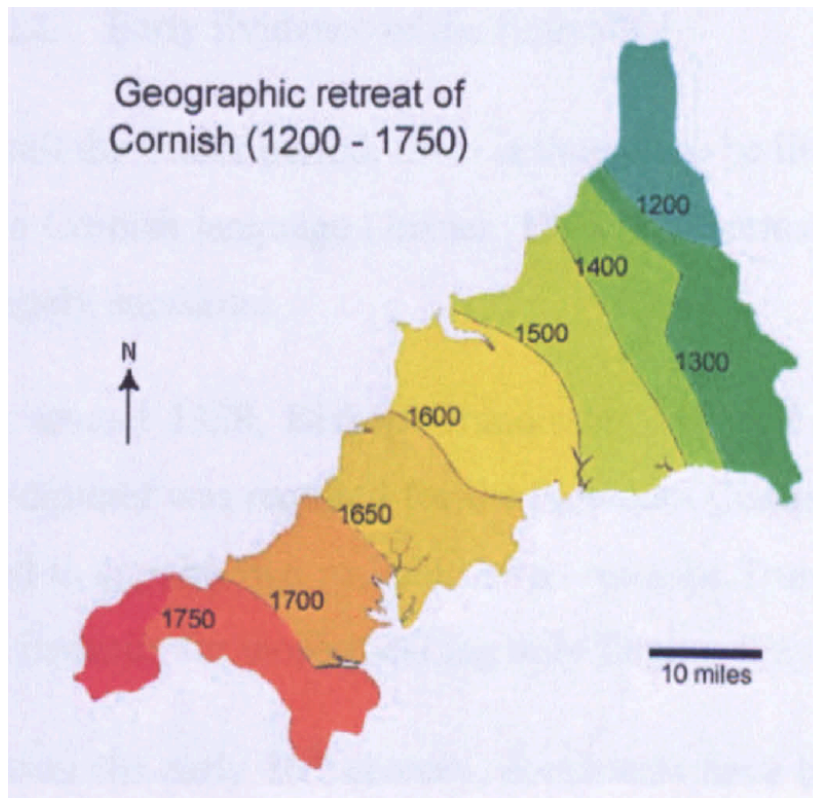


Figure 11: The retreat of cornish (adapted from George 1986a: 68)

3. 4. The Middle Cornish Period

‘Since written records are lacking, the extent to which Cornish was used [in the medieval period] is largely a matter for surmise’ (Elliot-Binns 1955: 400). While this is undeniably true of the thirteenth century, which is a complete blank, we have nonetheless in the following century our first fragments of direct evidence on the state of Cornish.

The principal source is the register of John de Grandisson, bishop of Exeter from 1327 to 1369, who records how, when preaching at St. Buryan (near Penzance) in 1326, he required the services of an interpreter. Ten years later he received a letter from the parishioners of this same village in connection with a long-running dispute. The principal parishioners made their submission in English and French although most had Cornish names, and the rest made theirs in Cornish, translated by the rector of a neighbouring

parish. In 1339, two years after Cornwall had become the country's first Duchy, in recognition of its peculiar position, a chaplain was licensed to preach in Cornish at St. Merryn near Padstow in the north-west, while in a list of confessors appointed in 1354 one Dominican friar at Truro was provided for those knowing Cornish only, while the rest were bilingual. When the Black Death struck Minster (north-west of Tintagel) in 1349, the death toll among the tenants and labourers of the priory was so high that it became impossible to support the members of the community. Since none of the survivors could speak Cornish, no chaplain could be provided for the parish (Elliot-Binns 1955).

Although the evidence is meagre, from the very fact that the existence of monoglot Cornish speakers is alluded to so seldom we can at least infer that English was widely disseminated even in the west. As we have seen, some of the parishioners of St. Buryan, a village only a few kilometres from Land's End, evidently had command of the language. In the numerous small towns that arose in Cornwall during the Middle Ages, English would have been in constant use if only as a *lingua franca*. According to Rowse, Cornish towns were remarkable for their high proportion of foreign residents. In 1327, Penryn was equally divided between natives and foreigners, while in Tregony and Grampound the foreign element predominated. 'At Fowey in 1439 there were twenty-seven alien householders, Irish, French, Dutch, perhaps as much as a third of the town, or at least of the property-holders' (Rowse 1941: 95). Rowse goes on to remark that Bretons constituted much the largest foreign element. The two languages were presumably still to an extent mutually intelligible, much as Irish and Scottish Gaelic are today, but what effect the Breton presence had on consolidating the position of Cornish is unknown. However, at least one the ways in which the Reformation was to accelerate the shift away from Cornish was to sever the connection between the Cornish and the Breton populations.

Tin-mining also led to the growth of towns, especially after the introduction of shaft-mining in the second half of the fifteenth century. The centre of the industry steadily shifted from east to west and this in turn must have entailed the in-migration of skilled labour (Rowse 1941: 54-55). In-migration, albeit of a more temporary nature, was also a consequence of the medieval pilgrimages. As Wakelin writes, the most important towns would be those on the main roads, and ‘... especially during the Middle Ages, those on route to St. Michael’s Mount, and pilgrims from beyond the Tamar journeying to this venerable shrine no doubt helped to disseminate English throughout the whole length of the county’ (1975: 98).

3. 4. 1. Middle Cornish Literature

The history of Cornish is generally divided into three phases, Old (10th-12th centuries), Middle (13th-16th) and late (17th and 18th centuries). The Old and Late phases are poorly represented in the surviving corpus. George (1986) has calculated that Late Cornish comprises only 14 percent of the recorded literature, while the contribution of Old Cornish is almost negligible. Middle Cornish, on the other hand, from which our knowledge of the language largely derives, comprises about 75 percent of the corpus (George 2009: 488) and is transmitted in the following (summarized from Jenner 1904 and Price 1984):

- A poem of 41 lines discovered by Jenner in 1877 on the back of a charter in the British Museum and dated by him to c. 1400.
- *Poem of Mount Calvary or The Passion*. Over 2,000 heptasyllabic lines composed in the late fourteenth century.
- *The Life of St. Meriasek*. A dramatized life of the patron saint of Cambourne in 4,568 lines. Single manuscript dates from 1504.
- *The Ordinalia*: a dramatic trilogy consisting of *Origo Mundi*, *Passio Domini* and *Resurrectio Domini*. Length (8,734 lines) and literary quality make this the one major item in Cornish literature.

- *The Tregear Homilies*. A translation from English of thirteen homilies by John Tregear, written between 1555 and 1558. Unpublished and ‘of no literary interest’ (Price 1984: 139).

There is much that can be inferred from this corpus about the relationship between Cornish and English. Firstly, with the exception of the *Vocabularium Cornicum*, whose place of origin is unknown, what remains of Cornish literature was almost certainly all composed in west Cornwall (Wakelin 1975: 86). The *Ordinalia* in particular can be narrowed (1975: 98) down to the Penryn area where it was probably composed by a local cleric (Bakere 1980: 28). Secondly, it is all of a popular nature, comprising saints’ lives, miracle plays and liturgical material. There are no legal or official documents of any kind. Thirdly, the considerable infiltration of English into the language, particularly of the *Ordinalia*, is such as to suggest either widespread bilingualism and code-switching. Although it is impossible to determine the extent to which the language of the plays is a faithful reflection of the contemporary spoken language, the influence of English is considerable. The almost macaronic quality of some of the verse, with whole lines and couplets in English, and, according to Bakere (1980: 5) ‘an average of three English words in every two lines’ would imply that even monolingual Cornish speakers (and there are known to be some as late as 1549) were acquainted with English to some degree. The following excerpt may serve as an example (loanwords italicized):

Benneth Maghom re'th fo prest	The blessing of Mahound be on thee
rak <i>certain</i> lell os ha <i>trest</i>	For certainly thou art loyal and always trusty
he <i>steadfast</i> y'th anbosow	and steadfast in thy agreements
<i>tormentourys</i> wythow[t] <i>rest</i>	Tormentors without rest
<i>comyth</i> <i>hedyr</i> <i>lest</i> and <i>mest</i>	come hither, least and most
lemyn yn ol ovthommow	now in all needs.

(PD 947-52: quoted by Fowler 1961: 112)

We have evidence of the popularity of the Cornish mystery plays in a near contemporary account by Richard Carew in 1594:

For representing it, they raise an earthen amphitheatre in some open field, having the diameter of the enclosed plain some forty or fifty foot. The country people flock from all sides, many miles off, to hear and see it, for they have therein devils and devices to delight the eye as well as the ear (quoted after Bakere 1980: 12-13).

These amphitheatres, known as Rounds or *plen-an-gwary* ('playing places') were widely distributed in west Cornwall but are not found in the east.

The plays themselves, and Cornish literature in general, are closely linked to the doctrines of the Church. Sermons were preached in the language and according to Carew again 'The Lord's prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and the Ten Commandments have been much used in Cornish beyond all remembrance' (quoted after Wakelin 1975: 98). Rowse speculates that the plays 'may be taken as some evidence of the concession the Catholic Church made to popular feeling, and may account for that devotion of the people to the old faith which led them to rise in rebellion against the Prayer Book in 1549 (1941: 148). Just as attachment to the language must have contributed to Cornwall's well-known religious conservatism, so the religious domain must have reinforced language loyalties.

To sum up, it is possible to conjecture the following: in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, English was spoken throughout east Cornwall and very little, if any Cornish. This sub-period, from 1497, the year of the Cornish Rebellion against the English Monarchy, until 1575 marks the decline of the language, with an estimated sixty percent of Cornish speakers residing in the country, most of them living west of Bodmin (Kent 2006:489).

In the west, the upper and middle classes, particularly the town-dwellers, and including the well-beneficed clergy, would have been English speakers, although some of them may have understood Cornish. Some of the rural population spoke Cornish only, many more were probably bilingual, among them the lower clergy, or to use Rowse's term, the 'clerical proletariat' (1941: 136). However, this is no more than plausible speculation. What is beyond doubt is that throughout the Middle Ages, English was spreading both geographically west across the peninsula and metaphorically down the social hierarchy. The lack of an urban concentration of Cornish speakers, itself symptomatic of the failure of Cornish to compete with English as a language of progress and commerce, reinforced its association with poverty and ignorance. Edwards' assertion that 'before the Reformation, Cornish was still in wide use' (1985: 66) may well be true, inasmuch as there are no demographic data to disprove it, but the future of the language arguably depended less on how many spoke it than on who spoke it and what for. By the end of the Middle Ages, Cornish is in restricted and declining use. With the Reformation, it enters its terminal phase.

3.5. The Tudor Period

The Dissolution of the English monasteries was effected at the instigation of Henry VIII between 1538 and 1541. The monastic colleges of Glasney near Penryn and Cranstock, which had been the main centres of Cornish literature, were suppressed and their buildings, including the scriptoria, looted and sold off in 1548. Thus the formal scholarship that had upheld Cornish cultural identity came to an end. Mills (2010), in a tellingly entitled article 'Genocide and Ethnocide: The Suppression of the Cornish Language' attributes to this vandalism a major role in engendering resistance to the imminent reformation. When the first English *Book of Common Prayer* was ordered to be used throughout the county, on 9 June 1554, it provoked a rebellion. A petition was presented to Edward VI, a paragraph of which reads:

We will not receive the new service, because it is but like a Christmas game. We will have our old service of Matins, Mass, Evensong and Procession as it was before; and we, the Cornish, whereof certain of us understand no English, do utterly refuse the new service (after Jenner 1904: 13).

The implicit argument that the new service was unacceptable in part because some Cornishmen understood no English loses its force when it is considered that even fewer would have understood the Latin of the Mass. However, the relationship between language loyalties and religious practice is a complex one and in the absence of other evidence, we must abstain from speculation about exactly what role Cornish played in creating the unrest. The uprising failed, but Cornwall did not easily embrace the new faith.

If the Reformation was the salvation of Welsh the same cannot be said of Cornish. The Bible and the Prayer-Book were not translated, presumably because the language was already considered obviously moribund, though Jenner quotes Bishop Gibson's continuation of Camden to the effect that the upper classes were against it (1904: 13). In a book religion such as Puritanism, the absence of mother-tongue literacy entailed further pressure towards anglicization and cultural uniformity. The Reformation also put paid to the mystery plays, although they seemed to have survived in some form until the end of the century. In Wales, the language emerged undefiled by jacobitism, popery, barbarity and rebellion. Cornish, however, like Scottish Gaelic and Irish, had become tainted with the stigma of sedition and a backward Catholicism.

Contemporary references to the state of the language are meagre. In 1532, in reply to a request from Henry VIII's adviser, Thomas Cromwell, for two Cornish wrestlers, Sir William Godolfin sent two of his household servants, 'the best for that feat', but 'their English is not perfect. The time is too short to make a further search.' Six years later Godolfin sends Cromwell some

tanners, remarking ‘you may call Herry to interpret these men’s language, for their English is very bad’ (Rowse 1941: 23). There were still many Cornishmen without any English at all, according to Andrew Boyle (1547):

‘In Cornwall is two speeches: the one is naughty Englyshe, and the other is Cornyshe. And there be many men and women thewhich cannot speake one word of Englyshe but all Cornyshe.’

(F. J. Purnivall (ed.) *The First Boke of the Introduction of Knowledge*. EEIS, ES 10 (1870); 125)

Fifty years later, the balance appears to have shifted. Carew writes:

But the principal love and knowledge of this language lived in Dr. Kennall the civilian, and with him lieth buried, for the English speeche doth still encroach upon it and hath driven the same into the uttermost skirts of the shire. *Most of the inhabitants can speak no word of Cornish, but very few are ignorant of the English.* (my italics) (after Halliday 1953: 127)

Assuming the accuracy of these observations, we can posit a substantial diminution in the number of monolingual speakers (‘many men and women’ to ‘very few’) in the second half of the sixteenth century. This would coincide with the high-water mark of English nationalism. Among the characteristics of state nationalism thought to be detrimental to minority languages are the acculturation and de-ethnicization that follow from centralization and increased social integration (Dressler 1982). From having been in the Middle Ages a promontory at the edge of the known world, Cornwall became in the period from 1569-1603 pivotal to English offensive and defensive policy vis-à-vis Spain. As Elizabeth I’s reign progressed,

West-country harbours became the jumping-off point for innumerable sea-enterprises across the outer ocean; in the

twenty years' naval warfare with which the epoch closed, Cornwall was in the most exposed position. Its isolation was ended; the process of the absorption into the life of the Englishpeople was in motion (Rowse 1941: 23-24).

Naval developments enhanced the importance of the ports as opposed to the inland towns and promoted the increase of commerce and mobility. Unless they also had English, Cornish speakers were debarred from participation in these developments. At the close of the Elizabethan era we find the language excluded from the religious domain and functionally confined to the rural poor. Literature in the language was insufficient to sustain language loyalties. With the discontinuance of the mystery plays it effectively came to an end. It could not be read because it was never published, and in any case it may be safely assumed that the vast majority of those attended the mystery plays were illiterate. Apart from the sporadic word or phrase, Cornish did not appear in print until 1707, with the appearance of Lhuyd's *Archaeologica Britannica*, which recorded a folk-tale of some 1500 words entitled 'The Story of John of Chy-an-Hur'. The title of Lhuyd's volume eloquently testifies to how the language had already become the preserve of the antiquarian. All this is in marked contrast to the situation in Wales. The first Welsh book was published in 1546 and by 1620 the complete Bible was in its second edition. In Scotland the failure to produce a Scots translation of the Bible in the 1550s is generally recognized as having been calamitous for the future of the language. Might the same not be said of Cornish? Would a Cornish translation of the Bible have significantly retarded language shift and averted the tipping point? Probably not. It is difficult in the first place to imagine how the feat could have been achieved, as the number of educated speakers must have been extremely small, and Biblical translation is a vast undertaking. Secondly, the language itself would have lacked the necessary resources both lexically and in register. The Welsh translators, on the other hand, had at their disposal the traditional poetry as maintained by the bardic schools (Price 1984: 99). Thirdly, the status of Cornish, like that of Manx in the eighteenth century, was too severely weakened and the

decline too far advanced for any translation to have made a significant impact. In contrast, it is significant that sixteenth century Wales was 95 percent monolingual and that in Scotland too, the vast majority of lowland Scots of all classes spoke Scots. Thus failure to translate the Bible and other religious books into Cornish should be regarded as a consequence of language decline rather than a cause.

3.6. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

The 1572 depositions of the Bishop's Consistory Court at Exeter reports a defamation case, whereby a local wife, during a service at Lelant church, is said to have 'called Agnes Davy "whore and whore bitch" in English and not in Comowok' (Henderson MSS, cited in Rowse, 1941: 23). Again, in 1595, a similar case is recorded at St. Ewe, with a girl reporting overhearing two women 'talking together both in Cornish and English' (ibid.). Cornish could still be heard, then, near St. Austell, in the east, at this late date (ibid.).

Perhaps one of the most renowned and widely cited sources on Cornwall and the language is Richard Carew's *The Survey of Cornwall* of 1602. It should be noted, though, that Carew was a member of the gentry classes, lived well, in the south east of Cornwall (Carew, [1602] 1953: 15), and spoke for the dominant families of the local society, who were, in general, in favour of the decline of Cornish (Stoyle, 2002: 182). He also published, in 1674, a work entitled, *The Excellencie of The English Tongue* (reproduced in Carew, [1602] 1953: 302). It is believed that Rowse's work, *Tudor Cornwall*, was heavily influenced by Carew and his opinions (Stoyle 2002: 182).

Carew's *Survey* provides information on the state of the language in seventeenth century Cornwall. He describes how, 'the English speech doth still encroach upon it [the language] and hath driven the same into the uttermost skirts of the shire. Most of the inhabitants can speak no word of Cornish, but very few are ignorant of the English' (Carew, [1602] 1953: 127). He goes on to describe their English as, 'good and Pure' (ibid.; see

also Scawen 1680, cited in Wakelin 1975: 91). This last observation, suggesting their language was ‘less dialectal’, and more akin to ‘Standard English’, may indicate that, rather than intergenerational transmission of English, they had acquired it through the gentry and education system (Wakelin 1975: 100). This would help substantiate the evidence that English was acquired far earlier in the east, by contact and fusion with neighbouring English monoglots, whereas the process was far later in the west.

John Norden’s *Speculi Britanniae Pars: a Topographical and Historical Description of Cornwall* was published in 1610 although the visit to the county on which it is based probably took place before the turn of the century. His observations on the ebbing of spoken Cornish are among the most detailed available:

[...] But of late the Cornishe men have muche conformed themselves to the use of the Englyshe tongue; and their Englyshe is equally to the beste, especially in the eastern partes, ‘even from Truro eastwards it is a manner wholly Englyshe. In the weste parte of the countrey as in the hundreds of Penwith and Kerrier, the Cornishe tongue is moste in use amongste the inhabitants. And yet (which is to be marveyled) though the husband and the wife, parents and children, masters and servants do naturally communicate in their native language; yet there is none of them in a manner, but is able to converse with a stranger in the Englyshe tongue, unless it be some obscure people who seldom confer with the better sort But it seemeth, however, that in a few years the Cornishe Language will be litle and litle abandoned (Norden, 1610, cited in Jenner 1904: 14-15).

The low prestige value of the language is clearly alluded to by Norden. There still remained some ‘obscure people’ seventy years later: William Scawen, seen by Stoye (2002: 134) as a ‘[s]eventeenth-century Cornish [p]atriot’, was an antiquarian, who, in later life, applied himself to the study

of the dying language and wrote his work, *Antiquities Cornu-Britannic*, in c.1680. In this work, he describes the state of Cornish, as he perceives it, and the likely causes of the 'decay'. He came from the gentry classes in the south east of Cornwall and consequently was brought up as an English monoglot, but taught himself the language in middle age (ibid.: 144). Whilst fighting in the Civil War, Scawen attests that Cornish could still be spoken then. He recalls how the Cornish speaking soldiers would use the language and how this aroused suspicion in the 'enemy' (Scawen, c.1680, cited in Stoye 2002: 142). This use of minority language, as a form of 'war-time secret code', would appear to emphasize the extent to which the language had indeed retreated by this time. He notes elsewhere, 'we have some among these few [old folks] that do speak Cornish, who do not understand a word of English, ...and those may be many in some of the western parts' (Scawen, c.1680, cited in Wakelin 1975: 91). This latter reference may be exaggerated, as it is thought that one of the last few monoglots, Cheston Marchant, died in 1676. However, given that it was said she was 164 (Ellis 1974: 80), the authenticity of these reports may be equally questionable.

It may be reasonably inferred that very few monolingual Cornish speakers survived into the eighteenth century. In the 1695 edition of Camden's *Brittania*, Cornish is described as 'almost quite driven out of the peninsula, being spoken only in two or three Parishes by the vulgar at the Lands end; and they too understand the English in all likelihood, a short time will destroy the small remains that are left of it' (quoted after Wakelin 1975: 92).

One of the final points of reference lies in 1707, with the arrival of Edward Lhuyd. He was a Welshman, and was to become the first professor of Celtic studies at Oxford. He was the first 'qualified' person to make a serious study of the Cornish language, as part of his undertaking to travel through the Celtic countries, studying their philology and history, which he published in 1707, as *Archaeologia Britannica* (Ellis 1974: 102). It was Lhuyd who made the distinction between Brythonic and Goidelic, or as he termed them, P Celtic and Q Celtic. Much of the information he gleaned on the language

has been criticized for its heavy dependence upon informants from his own social class. Nance berated him for not enquiring of the ‘unlearned but habitual Cornish speakers more than to amateur philologists’, believing that, had he done so, ‘his four months in Cornwall might have been spent to even better purpose’ (cited in Ellis 1974: 102-3). Nevertheless, on listing those areas where Cornish could still be heard, he was probably correct that many of the inhabitants, especially the gentry, no longer understood Cornish, ‘there being no necessity thereof, in regard there’s no Cornish Man but speaks good English’ (Lhuyd, 1707: 253, cited in Wakelin 1975: 92). Within 70 years of these words, the last Cornish speaker was thought to be dead.

As was foreseeable, Cornish survived longest in the remotest coastal villages around Land’s End and the Lizard. Records from the eighteenth century are relatively plentiful on account of the zeal of a group of Penzance antiquarians. However, for our purposes here, it is sufficient to affirm that Cornish ceased in the first half of the century to be used as a community language, and that a handful of former speakers could still be found in the 1770s. Every moribund language must have its ‘last native speaker’ and the choice has traditionally fallen on Dolly Pentreath of the fishing community of Mousehole, who died in her late eighties in 1777. She was one of several women contacted by Danes Barrington, in his search for speakers, in the years immediately before her death. In 1768 she had been persuaded to speak ‘for two or three minutes and in a language that sounded very like Welsh’ (Price 1984: 136). Younger claimants were subsequently found to be semi-speakers or ‘rememberers’. An epitaph was written for her in Cornish (Ellis, 1974: 120) though several later reports exist of people claiming to be able to speak the language (see Jenner 1904: 21-2). A final exhaustive search for Cornish speakers around Land’s End in 1808 met with no success. Wakelin (1975: 93) is distrustful of the enthusiastic but ‘not always reliable’ antiquarians. For him, ‘our last safe testimony is that of Lhuyd in 1707. He states that St Buryan was one of the last places where the language was spoken’. Ironically, it was in this same St Buryan that John de

Grandisson had preached in 1326. For the majority of his congregation he had required the services of an interpreter but with the leading citizens he could speak directly in French and English. Perhaps Wakelin was correct in asserting that 'Cornish was doomed from the moment the Anglo-Saxons crossed the Tamar, and it was only a matter of time before it succumbed completely' (Wakelin 1975: 97).

Of all the Celtic languages the fate of Cornish most closely resembles that of Manx. Both suffered the catastrophic loss of prestige that stemmed from subordination to an alien speech community and exile from all but the domestic and, for a time, religious domains. Both persisted for centuries as vernaculars spoken by largely rural populations and died out in remote fishing communities. It may be that these communities constituted a relatively stable and autonomous ecological niche and a safe haven. Or perhaps, as in the case of East Sutherland Gaelic, fishermen were at the bottom of the social scale, below even itinerant farm labourers, and hence the last to feel the social pressure towards language shift. Immigration resulting from the mining industry was a factor in the decline of both, as was, though in a minor and problematic way, the lack of instruction in schools and the paucity of reading matter. However, whereas Man's island status literally insulated it from centralization and acculturation (at least until the nineteenth century), Cornwall was far earlier and more fully absorbed politically and culturally into the English State; as a result the extinction of Cornish antedates that of Manx by two hundred years.

Chapter 4 : The Cornish Language Revival

4.0.Introduction

The Cornish movement was essentially the product of nineteenth-century economic disappointments and an emerging Celtic consciousness which had arisen in Ireland. It had ethnic revival as its central goal and the concept of the Celt as a touchstone. It inevitably also formulated a language question. The linguistic revival not only gave birth to the cultural revival, it also set the terms of discourse and became the measure of success or failure. Even now debates about the future of the movement go under the linguistic banners of middle and late Cornish, a debate which we shall see later is ideologically coloured.

Language occupied its central role originally because many nineteenth century thinkers believed language to be essentially linked to culture, so that its preservation came not just to stand for but to embody the preservation of the culture. The language revival was subsequently reinforced by the belief that language was the only cultural feature by which the Cornish could be distinguished definitively from the English and by the presumption that linguistic revival represented the first step towards political action. The essential link between language revival and political activism they inferred from the experience of other Celtic movements in Ireland, Wales and Scotland.

4.1. Henry Jenner and the Cornish Revival

The contemporary movement claims Henry Jenner (1848-1934), born in Cornwall of English and Scottish parentage, as its founding father, for it was Jenner, who as a young manuscripts clerk at the British Museum, brought the Cornish language from the academy and antiquarian investigation into popular consciousness. Jenner's encounter with Cornish was scholarly,

since it involved issues of linguistic description, analysis and standardization, but also emotional – it embodied an ideal of a lost homeland – and esoteric because it belonged primarily to his inner life and the realm of his aspirations (Williams 2004:35-36). By the 1870s, when Jenner addressed the Philological Society and the British Archaeological Society on the Cornish language, there existed a recognized paradigm for Celtic language scholarship. Comparative philology was at its zenith, and its coincidence with a rising interest in Celtic culture generated considerable academic interest in Cornish after 1850. By 1875 scholars at Oxford and amateurs with connections to learned societies, almost all non-Cornish, had published new translations of virtually all extant Cornish literature (five plays, one poem and one charter fragment) and had compiled two Cornish-English dictionaries. The involvement of scholars of the stature of Max Müller and the presentation of papers on Cornish at learned societies reflect the scholarly respectability Cornish studies had acquired (Ellis 1974: 125-146).

The mid-century interest in Cornish was wholly academic: Jenner articulated a position shared by scholars and aristocrats from the Elizabethan Carew to his own contemporaries, when in 1876 (while planning the centennial commemorations of the language's last native speaker, Dolly Pentreath) he is reported actually to have rejoiced in the death of Cornish as a vernacular, since for him the language was of purely historical and philological interest. Jenner, according to Morton Nance, '...actually congratulated the Cornish people that they no longer had a second tongue The general consensus at that time seems to have been that for all but philologists, the Celtic languages were best forgotten. Any proposal to revive Cornish would certainly not have won much backing'(quoted in Williams 2004: 88).

Jenner, however, was not entirely negative. In fact he soon began tentatively to sketch a case for a Cornish revival of limited scope:

The Cornish are again beginning to show their interest in their old language. I do not say that they are likely to introduce it as a spoken language to the exclusion of English, but I think a good many of those who do not know it will repair that defect, and will certainly learn to read it, probably to write, and possibly to speak it (quoted in Williams 2004: 97).

The case for Cornish was based firmly on sentiment and Cornish national feeling:

The reason why a Cornishman should learn Cornish, the outward and audible sign of his separate nationality, is sentimental, and not in the least practical, and if everything sentimental were banished from it, the world would not be as pleasant a place as it is (ibid.:51).

Our old language is gone and we cannot revive it as a spoken language, but its ghost still haunts its old dwelling and we cannot talk much about the county or its inhabitants without using plenty of Cornish words, so that in a sense we do talk some of it still (ibid.: 100).

Yet it would not be long before Jenner helped to found *Cowethas Kelto-Kemuak* (The Celtic-Cornish Society), a small group of Cornishmen determined to revive Cornish as a spoken language (Ellis 1979:145-147).

Jenner's *volte-face* may be attributable to the influence of the Celtic revival. The respectability that Celtic culture had acquired in literary and scholastic circles underwrote a popular resistance in Celtic areas to the British government's vigorous efforts to extend English usage at the expense of indigenous languages. Organizations to promote the use of Welsh, Scots Gaelic, Irish Gaelic, and Manx were formed in 1885, 1891, 1876 (also 1878 and 1893), and 1899 respectively.

Jenner followed the formation in 1901 of *Cowethas Kelto-Kernuak* with efforts to ally Cornwall officially with other Celtic regions. Despite the scepticism of some delegates, who were suspicious of Cornwall's Celtic pedigree, in 1904 his arguments secured admission to the Celtic Congress, which since 1901 had included the other five Celtic regions (Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Isle of Man, and Brittany). That same year he published his *Handbook of the Cornish Language*, a textbook designed for acquiring the language. Whether 'a demand was growing for a suitable textbook,' or whether Jenner saw in the growing but disorganized interest in Cornish culture an enthusiasm he might harness and channel towards to language revival is not clear (Ellis 1979:152). Ellis provides no evidence for such a demand, although the establishment of the London Cornish Association and the literary scholar Arthur Quiller-Couch's publication of the short-lived *Cornish Magazine*, both in 1898, testify to a wider nostalgic interest in Cornwall which might have appeared receptive to such an effort.

Jenner's goals in devolving Cornish to the people were not intended to subvert British unity. He was throughout his life a staunch monarchist. The notion of complementarity with England articulated in his introduction to the *Handbook* was widely shared in the late years of Empire. For Jenner, it was axiomatic that language was a function of race. Matthew Arnold had referred to the British personality as possessing a dual Celtic and Teutonic facets. English rationality neatly overlay any range of local traits. Thus Jenner's belief that the Cornish needed to speak their native tongue in order to release a Celtic essence otherwise unavailable to them was simply an appeal for a sort of emotional equilibrium (Korey 1991). Language, Jenner wrote, was the 'outward and audible sign' of nationality, but as he insisted, it was 'sentimental, and not in the least practical.'

That being so, then

[w]hy should a Cornishman learn Cornish? There is no money in it, it serves no practical purpose, and the literature is scanty and of no originality or value. The question is a fair one, and the answer is

simple. Because they are Cornishmen ... Every Cornishman knows well enough, proud as he may be of belonging to the British Empire, that he is no more an Englishman than a Caithness man is, that he has as much right to a separate local patriotism, to his little Motherland, which rightly understood is no bar, but rather an advantage to the greater British patriotism, as has a Scotsman, a Welshman, or even a Colonial; and that he is as much a Celt and as little an 'Anglo-Saxon' as any Gael, Cymro, Manxman or Breton (Jenner 1904: xi-xii).

The flurry of activity that heralded the cultural revival reveals themes which characterize the movement to the present day: the centrality of the language question and the importance of Celtic alterity or non-Englishness to Cornwall's revived identity. These emphases were consciously modelled after existing Celtic movements, especially the Irish. The similarity of Cornwall's early cultural revival to those in other Celtic areas prompted this observation by Ellis:

But whereas, in the other Celtic countries, the great cultural revival movements became the spring-board of movements for political and economic independence, which were quite strong at this time, in Cornwall such ideas of political independence were not to manifest themselves in any concrete form until the 1950s (Ellis 1979:151).

The activities of the language movement did eventually become a catalyst for anti-English activism. The proposition framed by Ellis, that language revival is the first step to political action, shaped the movement for much of the twentieth century. Initially, however, cultural nostalgia was sufficient to assuage any political grievances.

4. 2. The character of language revival in Cornwall.

Circumstances in Cornwall, both political and linguistic, were not as conducive to politicizing the language movement as they were in other Celtic areas. Cornwall was a fully integrated English county that lacked the structural distinctiveness which would reinforce a sense of separateness. The Cornish elite were highly anglicized, being educated and usually employed outside the county (Cornwall still lacks its own university). By the late nineteenth century too, Cornwall had lost her ablest working population to emigration (Payton 2004: 224). Moreover, the county had neither Ireland's long history of exploitation nor Scotland's and Wales' former national status to drive political protest. Cornwall was still recovering from the blow of its mine closures. But even if forces had favoured a political movement, converting the revival of a dead minority language into a instrument of political dissatisfaction was problematic.

By 1600 Cornish was spoken only in the westernmost corner of the peninsula, and while smatterings of Cornish may have persisted even after Dolly Pentreath's death in 1777, the language had been effectively dead long before then. Cornish was not the language of Methodist fervour or industrial ingenuity; Cornwall's period of prosperity was Anglophone, in spite of attempts within the later language movement to remedy this symbolic shortcoming by reconstructing Cornish from the scanty fragments extant in the late seventeenth century. Cornish's historic distance could also be seen as divisive. Whereas Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Welsh could be naturally acquired as first languages, Cornish was remote and abstruse, available only to those with the intellect and leisure to invest in it. Middle class exclusivity reinforced the conservatism inherent in such a backward-looking endeavour. Like the other language revivals, the Cornish revival was initiated by people who had few grievances against the powers that be. Their scholarly outlook led them to conceive of their project principally as an antiquarian or even mystical quest, wholly consistent with their status as model British citizens. In Cornwall there were no native speakers to

democratize the movement and in practical terms, the prerequisite of language acquisition practically precluded all beneath the comfortable middle class, whose conservatism and romanticism their revival could indulge.

4. 2. 1. Old Cornwall Societies and Gorseth Kernow

Jenner's attempt in 1907 to establish a Cornish *Gorseth*, modelled after the Welsh *Gorsedd* which had been meeting annually for almost a hundred years, failed for want of a sufficient number of Cornish speakers, and *Cowethas Kelto-Kernuac* dissolved soon afterward. Jenner and a few other individuals carried on, gathering fragments of traditional Cornish and composing short works in the language, but there was no further organized language movement until after the First World War.

By the end of the war both Jenner and Morton Nance, a language enthusiast born in Wales of Cornish parents, had returned to west Cornwall to live. In 1920 they formed in St. Ives the first *Old Cornwall Society*, an organization devoted to preserving Cornwall's Celtic past, especially the language. Four years later there were enough branches in the county to organize a *Federation of Old Cornwall Societies* and in 1925 the Federation undertook the publication of its semi-annual journal, *Old Cornwall*.

Contacts with *Gorsedds* in Brittany and Wales had been maintained by Jenner and Nance since late the previous century, and in 1928, under the auspices of the *Federation of Old Cornwall Societies*, the Welsh Archdruid inaugurated ten Cornish citizens as the first bards in the Cornish *Gorsedd*, termed in Cornish *Gorseth Kernow*. Like the Welsh *Gorsedd* which it was patterned, the *Gorseth Kernow* was an unabashedly nostalgic body, which attempted to recreate the theatre of Druidic bardolatry and poetry by exotic dress (and beards), by employing colourful regalia and archaic speech (both English and Cornish), and by holding their annual meetings at what were then believed to be Druidic monuments (stone circles and menhirs now

dated to the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age). The *Gorseth*'s goal was to restore Cornwall's sense of Celtic identity and accordingly, admission to bardship was made by an assessment of 'manifestations of the Celtic spirit', the principal evidence of which was demonstrable competence in the Cornish language. To advance Cornwall's Celtic spirit the *Gorseth* sponsored literary and musical competitions (in Cornish and English on Cornish themes) at its annual meetings. The difference between the two institutions lay principally in recruitment (the *Gorseth* honorary, the *Old Cornwall Society* open anyone interested) and trappings (the *Gorseth* having a marked ceremonial and sartorial predilection for the Arthurian period, the *Old Cornwall* contemporary in procedure and dress). Yet they shared the same goal, broadly conceived as the salvation of Cornwall's Celtic heritage and service to the Duchy. Both considered themselves custodians of the Cornish language, contemporary dialect, 'druidic' antiquities, old customs and pastimes, and Cornwall's scenic beauty. Both sought to draw ordinary Cornish adults and children into their activities, the *Gorseth* through sponsoring competitions, the *Old Cornwall Society* through open membership. Neither was political. The *Old Cornwall Society's* negatively phrased statement of purpose reveals how assiduously they sought not to court controversy, wishing to avoid causing offence to either potential members or existing organizations.

[A]n Old Cornwall Society is not an antiquarian society nor a county folk-lore society, nor a learned society of any sort neither is it an anti-English Celtic society, nor even a Cornish social club. It is a society in which lovers of Old Cornwall meet as informally as possible to learn more about the traditions of Cornwall.... Ours is thus, if no more, at least the first step towards a conscious revival of Cornish nationality. We make this step without any political object, unless it is 'political' to claim that Cornwall may possess a Celtic nationality while remaining a county of England (Federation of Old Cornwall Societies n.d.:3).

It is well to pause and recall that these efforts to recapture the poetical gatherings of Druids or record a remnant of agricultural ritual took place against a background of continued economic decline. Although the 1920s were a moderately prosperous time for England as a whole, with population and standards of living continuing to rise (although at a lesser rate than in the late nineteenth century), in Cornwall the effects of the mining collapse were still felt. Emigration had resulted in population decline every decade except one since 1861, with modest growth in the china clay mining districts in central Cornwall more than offset by departures from ailing mining and agricultural areas. The remnants of the tin mining industry had suffered further from the infusion of Bolivian tin after 1895. Sporadic recovery during the war years, aided by the demand for wolfram and high tin prices, had been short-lived. and by 1920 the collapse of prices, coinciding with the withdrawal of war-time smelting installations. brought mining populations to near starvation. Rumblings of union activity at the end of the war had been silenced by closures (Payton 2004: 214). Apart from the mining of china clay, Cornwall's principal sources of employment were agriculture and tourism, occupations whose low pay-scale and unreliability accounted for the county's high unemployment and underemployment in this period. The disjuncture between Cornwall's social problems and the 'sentimental, and not in the least practical' activities of the *Old Cornwall Societies* and the *Gorseth* may account for the latter's failure to gain a widespread following in the county. Alongside the language, the revivalists attempted to acquire, revive or invent as many symbols of nationality as possible. A black kilt was introduced and the black and white banner of St Piron revived as a national flag (Payton 2004: 262). By the 1930s, although annual ceremonies proceeded with undiminished splendour and 140 bards had been inducted, debates among the bards revealed dissatisfaction regarding the group's direction. Prodded perhaps by social concerns of the depression period, some argued that the *Gorseth* was disconnected from ordinary Cornish people by its lack of constructive activity on their behalf, appearing to them simply as irrelevant pageantry. Questioning the practice of basing election to bardship narrowly on interest in Cornwall's remote history and

language, one wrote sarcastically, ‘If Trevithick, Humphrey Davy and John Opie [eminent Cornishmen of the eighteenth century] were alive today, would they be merely successful, ambitious, and perhaps selfish men, and not eligible for bardship?’ In 1937, the editor of the *Penzance Cornishman* concluded, ‘If we are quite truthful we have to admit that the revival of the Gorsedd has hardly touched the lives of the common people of Cornwall’. The social disquiet of the thirties did not seriously disrupt the agenda of cultural revival laid down by Jenner. The *Gorseth*’s function remained essentially unchanged; arguments for social relevance were staunchly resisted. The thirties did, however, witness important advances on the linguistic front and a ‘one short-lived and ill-conceived attempt to interject politics into the agenda’ (Korey 1991: 210).

4.2. 2. Tyr ha Tavas.

The depression years were promising times for protest political movements of all kinds, which saw opportunities in the weaknesses of national governments still adjusting to the upheaval of the First World War and now additionally destabilized by economic crisis of the depression years. In these years the SNP was born from the union of the Scottish Party and the National Party, while the nationalist *Plaid Cymru* was launched in Wales. Responding to the climate of national uncertainty and to activities in Scotland and Wales, a small group of youthful Cornish political activists, mostly middle class students and professionals (about half of them London-based), in 1933 founded *Tyr ha Tavas* (‘Land and Language’) (Ellis 1974:165-67). The exact goals and priorities of this small, short-lived group are obscure, and there is debate within the present movement regarding its commitment to nationalistic goals. Its ideological position appears to have been close to that of the contemporaneous *Plaid Cymru*, but in transforming those goals to fit the Cornish situation, *Tyr ha Tavas*’s political aspects were largely obscured. Before Cornish culture could be preserved by nationhood, it needed instantiation and this began with language preservation. Preservation of the language began by establishing a core group of

proficient speakers. With this project in hand, *Tyr ha Tavas* constituted themselves as a correspondence circle and set up an all-Cornish language journal *King!* edited by A. S. D. Smith. The Cornish format, intended to display Cornish as a vehicle for contemporary issues, in effect limited circulation to a few dozen subscribers (less than half of whom lived in Cornwall), thereby reinforcing the exclusivity of their efforts. Their reputation as Cornwall's first political ethnic organization rests on their activities as a pressure group lobbying of London MPs. Ellis detects in *Tyr ha Tavas* an embryo of Cornish political activism, and it is significant that it was the first group whose agenda did not look backward to history or Celticism to build national sentiment (Ellis 1974: 165-169). So long as a restored language was considered a prerequisite for nationalistic activity, *Tyr he Tavas* continued under a different guise the isolating linguistic strategy outlined by Jenner, a "political" group in prospect only (Korey 1991: 210-12).

4. 2. 3. Morton Nance and Unified Cornish

Responding in part to the same populist currents that moved *Tyr ha Tavas*, the established language movement in the inter-war years expanded its efforts to advocate the use of Cornish as a written and spoken language in as many contexts as possible as well as attempting a full-scale reconstruction. In 1938, Morton Nance published his self-described 'life's work, an extensive Cornish-English dictionary derived from fifteenth- and sixteenth-century texts, using Breton grammar as a comparative model. To simplify and regularize a late medieval language which was highly variable (as was late medieval English), he rationalized variant spellings to produce a new orthography he termed 'Unified Cornish' (Ellis 1974:165-170). For nearly half a century, Nance's Unified Cornish was the standard form in which Cornish was written and taught. Nance's work was supplemented by that of the peripatetic A. S. D. Smith, a language teacher from Sussex who with Nance edited a small Cornish-English dictionary in 1934 and who in 1939 brought out a textbook, 'Cornish Simplified'. Although he lived in

Cornwall only from 1933 until 1936, when he returned to Sussex, it was he more than any other who communicated Nance's work to the public. Smith initiated Cornish instruction for school children and evening classes for adults, continuing until his death in 1950 to prepare teaching materials and compose contemporary Cornish literature. Led by the efforts of Nance and Smith, the language movement in the thirties expanded, albeit modestly, from its organizational base into the lives of ordinary citizens. Jenner died in 1934 at the age of 86, having shaped the Cornish revival and watched it develop according to his intentions. The goals he set – the revival of the Cornish language as a living language and the preservation of the fragments of Cornish culture for future generations – remained unmodified by his followers in the inter-war period. The movement remained (and in fact remains still) solidly middle class, comprising scholars, clergymen, teachers and professionals. Their activities were principally literary, producing manuals, dictionaries, plays, stories, articles, and poems in Cornish and translating into Cornish hymns, prayers, Biblical passages, and local tales and folklore. Revival activities were noted periodically and favourably by *The Times*, as well as by local newspapers (Ellis 1974: 156-171). While cultural preservation was seen by contemporaries as patriotic, it was not political, and modern activists have censured the earlier revivalists for their political quietism and elitist disengagement from everyday life. As Deacon writes,

Given the ideological form of the Revival; its non-populist, even patronizing stance, the absence of many of its leaders from Cornwall, its refusal to connect up with the form of Cornish identity lived by the people – a form that owed more to the nineteenth century than to the mists of Celtic Cornwall – cultural nationalism was bound to be perceived as irrelevant, a plaything for elements of the Cornish elite (Deacon 1996:26).

Deacon's judgment is probably harsher than that of contemporaries. While there was genuine debate within the *Gorseith* about its social responsibilities,

and while local editors aired grievances, the assessment of the general population is likely to have been more sympathetic, if still ambivalent. Thousands turned out to witness the first induction of bards into the *Gorseth* (Ellis 1974: 161) and Cornish men and women may well have viewed the cultural revival with the same mixture of pride in the culture being revived and resentment toward the class of the revivers they display toward much of the modern movement.

4. 2. 4. The debate over sources and orthography for revived Cornish

As has been stated above, the foundational text of the Cornish revival, Jenner's *Handbook of the Cornish Language* is thought to have been used as a primer by Morton Nance (Price 1984: 141), who after Jenner was to become the second most influential architect of the twentieth century revival. After the inevitable disruption of World War I, despite their friendship and long collaboration, Nance and Jenner harboured a fundamental difference of opinion with respect to the actual basis on which Cornish should be reconstructed. While Jenner was keen to promote the language from the point of its last use, Nance was adamant that the Cornish of the Middle phase was more appropriate, if only on the pragmatic grounds that this was the period in which the majority of the written documentation stemmed (George 2002: 646). Although this division of opinion is now widely acknowledged in the revival narrative, it should be noted that Jenner did not dismiss Middle Cornish out of hand. In the Preface to his *Handbook*, he reflects that, '[a]s for grammatical forms, it will be seen that the writer is of the opinion that the difference between Middle and Modern Cornish was more apparent than real' (Jenner 1904: x).

Jenner's spelling system was somewhat contrived or 'adapted', as he termed it (Jenner, 1904: ix), but this was unavoidable, he goes on to explain, because of the universal tendency for writers to spell 'according to their own taste and fancy'. The situation was further complicated by the tendency to 'represent the same word in different ways even in the same page' (Jenner,

1904: ix). He rejected the description of *phonetic* for his system, although he recognizes the influence of Lhuyd, who is known to have used a phonetic basis for his spelling. Jenner claims to have compared extant spellings, considered the fragments he himself had collected thirty years previously, and combined this with knowledge of contemporary pronunciation of names and his knowledge of Breton (Jenner, 1904: x). His diktat that ‘this form of spelling should be generally adopted by Cornish students’ was not to be meekly followed by his successors.

4. 2. 5. The Unified Spelling System

In 1938 Nance published his extensive Cornish-English dictionary, the orthography of which was explicitly based on Middle Cornish, more specifically on those forms found in the *Ordinalia* and the *Passion Poem*. If alternative spellings were discovered, then the most common variant was selected (George 2002: 646). Inevitably, the language was not attested in its entirety in these works and many gaps remained, which Nance supplemented by internal analogy, using forms found in later periods and cognates from Breton and Welsh. These processes, it has been suggested, must be accepted as unavoidable when religious verse, with its partial syntax and lexicon, is taken as a basis for a conversational language (George 1986b: 12). Unified Cornish brought together the orthography of the Middle Cornish phase, as standardized by Nance, with his deduced phonology of the Late phase, supplemented by a number of discretionary patches.

Given that the pronunciation of a dead language can never be reconstructed with any certainty, Nance maintained the conviction that The link between the phonology and intonation of the English spoken in the vowel sounds of Cornish as last spoken can still be heard from the inhabitants of West Cornwall. the far west of Cornwall, as an approximation for Late Cornish forms, has been an enduring myth amongst language commentators and activists alike, not only Nance. Jenner, in the *Handbook*, comments that, ‘The modern Cornish intonation of English is probably a fair guide to the

intonation of Cornish' (Jenner 1904: 55). A prominent revivalist, Retallack Hooper, published a paper in 1931 entitled, 'Dialect as a Gateway to Cornish'. In this, he makes the questionable assertion that the dialect of west Cornwall reveals 'practically all the sounds of Cornish as last spoken' (Hooper 1931: 34-5, in Wakelin 1975: 85).²⁸ In his *Language and History in Cornwall*, Martyn Wakelin, the dialectologist responsible for the South-West section of the Survey of English Dialects, sets out to debunk this myth. His rebuttal is uncompromising:

Whatever the state of dialect in 1931 regarding the retention of archaic features, it is clear that it is at the present time of no use whatsoever to the student of Cornish, and it is my opinion that it never was (ibid.: 86).

Wakelin acknowledges the attraction of 'Cornish continuity' (continuities are after all in short supply in the revivals of dead languages), noting as if in sorrow that it 'still exercises a fatal fascination and is dearly cherished among Cornish patriots' (ibid.: 86).²⁹ He concludes nevertheless that English alone was the 'influencing agent, dominating Cornish so completely that the latter's sound system became assimilated ... to that of English' (ibid.: 85). English, in contrast, was not influenced by Cornish at all. Lexical borrowings, for instance, 'have been almost mainly one-way: from English, etc. into Cornish – with few the opposite way.' (Wakelin 1989: 203). David North (1983: 70) supports Wakelin's reasoning, stating, 'There is no need to turn to Cornish to explain any feature of Anglo-Cornish phonology'. In 1986, this cornerstone of Nance's phonology came under renewed attack by George, who reiterated the critique: 'My own researches ... support the view that the English dialect of west Penwith is a development of the standard

²⁸ At stake for the revivalists are sacrosanct notions such as the quintessential Cornishness of Cornwall and resilience in the face of Anglicization.

²⁹ 'King Arthur is not dead' in Cornish is the telling motto of the Old Cornwall Society.

English of the late seventeenth century rather than of Late C[ornish]' (George 1986b: 22).

Nance's justification for his phonological recommendations thus appears to be unsustainable, but in the 1930s Nance and Smith's stream of publications cemented the near unanimous acclaim for the new Unified language. From the outset, the *Gorsedd* accepted the Unified form as its language of operation. All Cornish teaching, which was mediated through the *Gorsedd* until 1967, was to be in Unified (Combella 1978: 46). Smith was so admiring of Nance's system that he wrote:

...we have a compact mediaeval language ... little likely to undergo any further change; and we can take heart at the thought that what we now write in Cornish will be as fully intelligible 1000 years hence as it is in the present year of grace (Smith, 1947)

This bizarre assertion, that the language would now be set in stone and remain essentially unchanged for a millennium, defies what is known about languages changing over time and is reminiscent of anxieties expressed by Swift concerning the dangerous mutability of English and the need for 'ascertainment'. It seems unlikely that Smith could have meant it literally.³⁰ Nance is thought to have been the dominant force in their professional relationship (George 1986b: 26) but what is clear is that Smith believed Nance to have made a definitive contribution to the revival. The reconstruction of Cornish grammar and syntax was undertaken by Nance and Smith before the outbreak of war and is still held to be 'reasonably satisfactory' and probably 95 percent correct (1986b: 7). It was in the orthography that Nance had devised and in its phonological implications that discontent surfaced. For the purposes of the revival of spoken Cornish, Nance's formulation of the language seemed stiff and archaic and his

³⁰Perhaps an allusion to a poem by James Elroy Flecker (1884-1915) 'To a Poet a Thousand Years Hence', addressed to a 'student of our sweet English tongue'.

phonology lacked some distinctions which later research showed must have existed in traditional Cornish. George was convinced of the ‘deficiencies’ of Unified as he studied the medieval texts in their original orthography (George 1986b: 31). His proposed alternative was to prove highly contentious.

4. 2. 6. Common Cornish or *Kernewek Kemmyn*

George’s methodological criticism of Nance is that he appears to have first decided upon the orthography and, from that, ‘thought out a phonological system to fit it’ (George 1986b: 14). George is unequivocal that, ‘[t]his is the converse of what they should have done’. *Kernewek Kemmyn* was the culmination of performing the ‘reverse’. George’s project involved using computer programs he had devised himself to perform statistical analyses of graphemes, using the major part of the known literature. The end result was, for George at least, a clearer understanding of the pronunciation of traditional Cornish, and a ‘chronological list of the sound changes ... to examine how a particular word changed [from 600 to 1800 CE]’ (George 1986b: 24). He argued that Middle Cornish should continue to be used for the revived language but insisted that it was essential to recover the pronunciation of the Cornish of the period. Old Cornish sounds could be ‘up-dated’ and the Late Cornish examples ‘back-dated’ to obviate Nance’s mismatch (Payton 2000: 117). Unified was vitiated by anachronistic features (George 1986b: 24) and oversimplified actual Middle Cornish spelling, which, in turn, created a self-perpetuating ‘incorrect scheme of pronunciation’ (ibid.: 31). In this George was echoing academic scepticism concerning the artificiality and unavoidable incongruities of the revived language (Price 1984).

George’s position within the revival is unusual in that he straddles both interest groups, the language planners and amateur enthusiasts on the one hand, and the academics and philologists (though not himself a professional linguist), on the other. He addresses both groups’ dilemmas explicitly:

Unfortunately, a few [pronunciation] problems remain, and are unlikely to be solved in the absence of traditional Cornish speakers. This may worry the purist, but in my view they are not so great as to prevent us from continuing to speak Cornish as a modern language. We are not (alas!) called upon to converse with Cornish speakers from past centuries. Yet, if Revived Cornish is to gain more respectability in the academic world, it is essential that its reconstruction be seen to be as accurate as possible. (George, 1986b: 7)

George criticizes academics for not promoting dialogue between the two fields, decrying the ‘mutual misunderstandings’ and an inability to recognize the fundamental differences in their objectives, linguistic rigour versus language planning (George 1986b: 35). The desideratum of linguistic rigour remains uppermost for George’s critics, in particular Celticist Nicholas Williams, who well over a decade and in numerous publications has been ferocious and unrelenting in dismantling George’s *Kernewek Kemmyn*, ‘mistaken both in conception and execution’ (Williams 2006b: 60). Among defects identified are the following:

- The timing of a ‘prosodic shift’ in Cornish and the presence or absence of half-length vowels in the Cornish of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (Williams 2006a).
- The fact that, despite claiming to be phonemic, the same grapheme sometimes represents different sounds and the same phonemes are sometimes represented by two or more graphemes (Williams 2006a).
- Failures of methodology. The inaccuracies of the analysis underpinning the reconstruction of a late medieval phonology have led one linguist to despairingly conclude that ‘there is very little that

could be said to be right about any of them' (Mills 1999: 201).

- The database that underlies 'common' Cornish has been shown to be consistently flawed. Williams (2006a) cites over four hundred instances where the data concerning attestations in the historic texts cited in the *Gerlyver Kernewek Kemmyn*, the dictionary of 'Common' Cornish, erroneous.
- Hardly any 'common' Cornish users actually pronounce late medieval Cornish as it is intended to be pronounced. The claim that the pronunciation and spelling of 'common' Cornish are 'closely wedded' (George 1995: 113) is wishful thinking. As 'common' Cornish is not pronounced according to the hypothetical pronunciation of 1500 then the switch from 'unified' to 'common' Cornish would appear to have been a 'complete waste of time and energy' (Mills 1999: 207).

4. 2. 7. The Role of Official Policy Documents

The Cornish Language Board (CLB), established in 1967, to centralize and take responsibility for the revived language, initially adopted Unified with confidence. Its policy statement, of its founding year, declared, 'The Board considers that Unified Cornish provides an acceptable common basis for spelling modern writings in the Language' (Ellis 1974: 199). In 1987, however, George's *Kernewek Kemmyn* was accepted by a vote of 14:1 in favour (MacKinnon 2000). The 1997 policy statement reiterates its support for the reforms of George by stating,

The Board asserts that the adoption of *Kernewek Kemmyn* as an academically correct form of Cornish is a necessary step in the development of the language. The Board will continue to work to establish its adoption as widely as possible in all aspects of Cornish life (Brown and Sandercock 1997: 18).

The presence of ‘academic’ and ‘academically’ in this short document (theenty-three pages), indicating the perceived need to placate the academic world regarding the language’s credentials. In addition, there is a noteworthy passage, seemingly aimed at mollifying the supporters of Unified, which stresses that the two systems are ‘not drastically different in sound or appearance’ and that examinations and publications will continue to be available in Unified (Brown and Sandercock 1997: 16). This statement is both aware and wary of the factions that had developed since 1986 and may suggest a relative weakness of the CLB within the movement itself. Williams criticized the Board for adopting *Kemmyn* with inadequate consultation (Williams, 1996a), suggesting the decision was ‘rushed through’ in an attempt to appease the Celticists within the academic world. As has been mentioned, George’s reforms were not universally welcomed. Among a small community of speakers, who had been ‘brought up’ on Unified and whose support had even been financial at times (Combella 1978: 47), hostility to the changes was inevitable. Even now, language activists struggle to speak of George with equanimity, although at the time many approached the learning and teaching of *Kemmyn* with resignation.

4. 2. 8. A Late Cornish Challenge.

In 1972, Richard Gendall produced a textbook entitled, *Kernewek Bew* (Living Cornish), in which he advocated that, like Jenner, the pronunciation of Late Cornish should be followed, but with Unified spelling being retained. ‘Revived Modern Cornish’ is based on the period between the Tregear Homilies (c.1558) and Mousehole fisherman, William Bodinar’s late letter of 1776. It promotes a standard orthography, ‘representing a careful selection from textually attested examples’. In the 1990s Gendall went further and recommended that Unified Cornish should be abandoned completely in favour of his Modern Cornish or *Kernuack* (Payton, 2000: 117), then went on to produce grammars and dictionaries to support the recommendation. Gendall believed that the English pronunciation of the far

west of Cornwall was suggestive of Late Cornish sounds, despite the dialectologists' evidence to the contrary (see above). The premise would seem to be that in a sense Cornish never really died and that the generation of 'remembers' that followed that of the alleged last speakers ensured an apostolic succession reflected in a heavily Cornish-inflected English. In essence, this another attempt to affirm continuities, attenuate the rupture represented by language death, and avoid the diachronic messiness of reconstruction (Carkeek 2009: 111).

The *Cussel an Tavas Kernuak* (Cornish Language Council) was established in 1988, to further the cause of Gendall's Modern Cornish, producing its own magazine, *An Garrack*. Nevertheless, Mackinnon reported estimates of users of Modern Cornish to be no more than twenty-five, compared with approximately two hundred *Kemmyn* speakers (Mackinnon 2000). Modern Cornish is thus a peripheral group within the movement and it would seem that most Unified speakers ultimately embraced *Kemmyn*, if only on account of greater exposure to it.

4. 2. 9. The Unified System Revised

Unified Cornish was, in Payton's words, to find 'an eleventh-hour academic champion in the form of Nicholas Williams' (Payton, 2000: 117), a professional Celticist from University College, Dublin who had learnt Cornish as an Essex schoolboy and, as mentioned above, was hostile to George's *Kernewek Kemmyn*. Williams' chosen nomenclature was 'Unified Cornish Revised' (Williams, 1996b: 84), which uses *Beunans Meriasek*, the Tregear Homilies and Creation of the World, as the basis for the new system. His arguments were initially published in the book *Cornish Today* in 1995, in which he listed 25 points of linguistic departure he had with the phonology and orthography of *Kernewek Kemmyn*. Williams is unambiguous in his belief that, 'Unified is by far the least unsatisfactory form of the language and *Kernewek Kemmyn* is so mistaken that it should be abandoned' (Williams 1996a). He is thus in complete

agreement with archaeologist Charles Thomas, the first director of the Institute of Cornish Studies, who explicitly concluded, ‘the Language Board has taken an unjustifiably wrong turn’ in adopting George’s system (quoted in Payton and Deacon 1993: 284). Modern Cornish is similarly treated, having in Williams’ view ‘little to recommend it’ (Williams, 1996a). These comments, and many similar examples of ill-disguised contempt, were delivered in a talk given by Williams in 1996, in which he appeals for a return to Unified Cornish. The overall tone, however, is dismissive: ‘*Kernewek Kemmyn* looks wrong because it is wrong ... If you use *Kernewek Kemmyn*, please give it up as soon as you can. If you are thinking of learning it, don’t ... Only when *Kernewek Kemmyn* is abandoned, will Cornish speakers find peace of mind’ (ibid.: 6).

In the same year, Williams published a slightly more measured appraisal in the journal *Cornish Studies*. One of Williams’ main concerns is that the spelling in *Kemmyn* is a re-writing of Middle Cornish, whereas Unified forms are attested in the Middle Cornish texts (Williams 1996b: 65). George has pointed out, however, that ‘Cornish has little or no historical spelling tradition of its own; since the fourteenth century, it has almost always been written using contemporary English orthography’ (George, 1986b: 32). Williams would seem to dispute this assertion (Williams, 1996b: 83). The evidence from Wakelin’s analysis of the Cornish texts, however, shows that Anglo-Saxon letters were being used even in the very early Bodmin Manumissions c.1000 CE (Wakelin 1975: 67).

4. 2. 10. The Problem of Authenticity

The ‘Holy Grail’ of authenticity has haunted the minds and writings of the Cornish language revivalists.³¹ It has been a constant battle ground of the

³¹ Arguably, one of the reasons the notion holds such a powerful sway is that the Celtic identity itself is understood as being a return to an authentic ethnic selfhood grounded in lost community values. For an exploration of twentieth century versions of authenticity, see Charles Cuignon (2004), *On Being Authentic* (London: Routledge).

three main contenders for primacy in the choice of which form of the language to revive and has exercised their critics even more so (see Price, 1984). This is in marked contrast to the wider revival movement, where an inauthentic and kitschy tradition has been embraced without embarrassment. Glanville Price, in his *The Languages of Britain* opened his chapter on Cornish with the declaration: ‘The old Celtic speech of Cornwall died out two centuries ago. It is still dead, and will ever more remain so’ (Price, 1984: 134). Readers are left in no doubt as to Price’s disdain for the ‘type of language’ then being revived in Cornwall. In the first paragraph he makes three references to its lack of authenticity or genuineness and is dismissive enough of the ‘language’ to deny it the name Cornish – ‘I shall reserve the term for genuine Cornish and shall refer to pseudo-Cornish as “Cornic”’ (Price, 1984: 134).

For Price, revived Cornish is a chimera created by ‘ill-informed journalists [who] sometimes give the impression that Cornish is now once more a living language’ (Price, 1984: 141). Cornic is, in Price’s judgement, a twentieth century invention in all respects. He condemns the extent to which much of the vocabulary is invented, echoing Charles Thomas, who refers to the ‘high proportion of words invented by the comparative method’ (quoted in Ellis, 1974: 194) and attacks the revivalist, Nance, for not consistently identifying his neologisms and the confusion this engenders when one wishes to separate the ‘genuine’ from the ‘invented’ (Price, 1984: 143). In response to this criticism, Wella Brown, a Gorsedd bard, teacher and author of the principal *Kemmyn* grammar, calculated that a mere 8 percent of the words in Nance’s 1955 dictionary lacked textual authority. In recognition that not all words are used in equal quantities, he went on to analyse a copy of the Cornish language periodical, *An Lef Kernewek* to discover that only 1.6 percent of the words here were not directly attested (in George, 1986b: 37). Interestingly, in Price’s follow-up edited volume of 2000, entitled *Languages in Britain and Ireland*, the chapter on Cornish is written not by Price himself, but by Philip Payton, the Director of the Institute of Cornish Studies, who offers a notably more sympathetic appraisal of the revival. The

precedence of Modern Cornish over Unified and *Kemmyn*, centres on the premise that, ‘authenticity should be the ruling factor in the language’, that is, ‘in all aspects of the language’, a quality he implies is absent from the competing forms (ibid: 102). The concern with authenticity continued, alongside the competing bases for revival, spawning, what Deacon has labelled, a postmodern ‘plurality of authenticities’ (Deacon 1996: 100). Indeed, ‘authenticity’ became a battlefield on which there were no victors. In 1967, with the advent of the CLB, the need to assuage the concerns of both the academics and the language planners began to be acknowledged. The founding Policy Statement was clear in its acceptance of Unified Cornish but equally it ‘recognized that Unified Cornish has little significance for more advanced linguistic studies’ (Ellis 1974: 200). This revival-focused attitude was to be ephemeral. The 1997 Policy Statement explicitly asserts the necessity of ‘academic soundness of the language’ (CLB 1997: 16) and justified the lock, stock, and barrel adoption of *Kernewek Kemmyn*, on the basis that it represents ‘an academically correct form of the language’ (CLB 1997: 18). Williams believes that the CLB was so eager to fend off the academic criticisms that it over-hastily embraced *Kemmyn*, in the erroneous belief that George had shown it to be more authentic (Williams, 1996a). Deacon (1996: 101) interprets this fixation as being symptomatic of the mandatory scientific discourse of classic modernity. The quest for authenticity is a ‘modernist problem’, whilst the emergence of competing ‘authenticities’, from the mid 1980s, illustrates a transition towards postmodernity, where certainties dissolve and thus the search for them becomes ever more frantic but concomitantly more meaningless (Deacon 1996: 101). George at times appears to advocate that authenticity should cede preeminence in the revival process, but never truly escapes its lure, as is demonstrated by a concluding paragraph in *The Pronunciation and Spelling of Revived Cornish*:

I can therefore state with confidence that Revived Cornish, as exemplified by the phonological base described in this chapter, is closer to Cornish of 1500 than were either Old C[ornish] or

Late C[ornish]. What is more, it is closer to the Cornish of 1500 than is, say, the “Geordie” dialect to standard English (George 1986b: 91).

Williams, in praise of his Unified Cornish Revised (UCR), is equally insistent on the notion that the revenant be as close as possible in appearance the deceased. He states that, ‘It is the job of those reconstructing Cornish to render the reconstruction as authentic as possible. Authenticity is the overriding criterion - indeed it ought to be the sole criterion’ (Williams, 1996a). Indeed, the reforms advocated in UCR are deliberately motivated to ‘render Unified more authentic’ (Williams 1996b: 83), at the expense of *Kemmyn*, which ‘bears little resemblance in sounds or spelling to the traditional language of Cornwall at any period in its history’ (ibid.: 82) and ‘[i]f it can be shown that *Kernewek Kemmyn* is far less authentic than Unified, as it can, then *Kernewek Kemmyn* loses any *raison d’être* it may have had’ (Williams 1996a). Within the rhetoric of ‘genuine or not’, George himself is accused of being personally inauthentic, lacking the required technical credentials, as he is ‘not a professional linguist, let alone a professional Celticist’³² (Williams 1996a), an attack reminiscent of Professor C. L. Wrenn’s acerbic comment on Nance’s dictionary, that it ‘displays that scarcely scientific revivalist local patriotism which is still so commonly associated with Cornish studies’ (Ellis 1974: 195).

4. 2. 11. Orthographic Authenticity

The issue of how Cornish was actually spelled has been a consistent theme in the discourse on authenticity. *Kemmyn* especially, has been portrayed as a rewriting of the spelling of Middle Cornish, producing a ‘bizarre and exotic spelling’ (Williams, 1996a), and having a ‘somewhat sinister appearance, as if the language had somehow been taken over by robots and reduced to the status of a code’ (cited in Williams 1996b: 78). *Kemmyn* is, thus, by

³²George was by profession an oceanographer but also a speaker of Breton, which influenced his vision of the form a revived Cornish should take.

implication, invented and can make no legitimate claims to authenticity. As a predominantly oral medium of communication, Cornish had no developed orthography of its own. Cornish. No legal or administrative documents of any sort have ever been found that were written in Cornish (Wakelin 1975: 80). The literature in the language was predominantly intended for oral presentation. What seems to be obscured is that ‘Cornish was written down by native speakers for other native speakers’ (Grant 1998: 197), people that knew the phonological rules of the language. When writing was unavoidable, it followed the conventions mainly of English spelling, but also of French and Latin at times (ibid). It seems that the protagonists in this debate are trapped within contemporary conventions, constrained by an ethnocentric primacy of standardization – a standardization that may be meaningless diachronically (Carkeek 2009: 117).

4. 2. 12. The divisive effects of revivalist antagonisms

The rift within the language community has evidently painful and very personal. Since the late 1980s, claims and counterclaims have centred on all conceivable linguistic points of divergence and disagreement, and often degenerating into personal attacks and vitriol. One potentially positive outcome of the ‘debate’ has been to place the language in the public domain and stimulate interest beyond the inner circle of language learners. For some the factional image may have deterred them from learning the language or even taking it seriously. Learners, moreover, have been chary of online communication lest they be seen to be nailing their colours to an orthographic mast and alienating other learners. The Cornish Language Board has maintained a neutral and conciliatory approach. Developments in 2008, however, explicitly addressed this issue.

Authenticity in language revival is a frequently articulated demand, as we have seen. However, as Dorian points out, this may not be necessary or even desirable. ‘Purity need not be a requirement for persistence, and compromise need not be the death knell, for small languages any more than

for larger ones'. In fact, 'it may prove the wiser course to accept considerable compromise rather than make a determined stand for intactness' (Dorian, 1994: 492). The obsession with authenticity that has plagued the revival movement in Cornwall, has significantly damaged the cause and created rifts amongst the already numerically small and scattered language-learner community. Dorian herself reflects this in her allusion (1994: 488) to the 'unhappy situation of Cornish'. She quotes the editor of *Bro Nevez*, the newsletter of the US branch of the International Committee for the Defence of the Breton Language, 'If some of the tremendous energy Celts have used to belittle each other's ideas of "the truth" was directed towards working for more resources to support research, teaching, and media use ... people would not need to talk so much about survival' (Dorian, 1994: 488-9). Energies squandered in acrimonious factional bickering are a direct consequence of inadequate documentation in the Late Cornish Period, itself a result of declining usage and literacy in the language. The Cornish Language Board's endorsement of *Kernewek Kemmyn* sought to accommodate the dimension of learnability while at the same time upholding the legitimacy of the revived form.

4. 3. Standardization achieved: the Standard Written Form (2008)

The multiple orthographies used by different Cornish language groups have been an impediment to official recognition and development of the language, most notably within the education and public spheres. Consequently, the Cornish Language Partnership, the body established to implement the Cornish Language Development Strategy, commissioned a group of internal language activists and international, language planning experts, in 2006, to propose a Standard Written Form (SWF). In October 2007 a consensus approach was recommended, rather than promoting any of the extant forms. This SWF was ratified by the Partnership in May 2008, with the agreement of all language groups. On 17 June 2009, the bards of the *Gorseth Kernow* chose by an overwhelming majority to adopt the SWF

for their ceremonies and correspondence. From its inception Unified Cornish had been used for the *Gorseth* ceremony.

Kernowek Standard (Standard Cornish) is a proposed set of revisions to the SWF, based on the initial proposal (called *Kernowak Standard* and now designated KS1) for the SWF, developed by a group called *UdnFormScrefys*. After the publication of the SWF, members of this group established a new group, *Spellyans*, to identify shortcomings in the SWF and propose solutions for consideration when the SWF was to be reviewed in 2013. The orthography resulting from the application of these revisions, *KernowekStandard*, has been used in a number of books, including an edition of the Bible and a comprehensive manual, Nicholas Williams' *Desky Kernowek* (2012)³³. It may not be premature to affirm that the long and tortuous road to standardization has at last reached its destination. In 2014, the Cornish people were recognised by the United Kingdom Government as a national minority under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The FCNM provides certain rights and protections to a national minority with regard to their minority language. Whether such recognition would have been granted in the absence of an internally reconciled Cornish revival movement is not known.

The use of Cornish may be growing but remains marginal, spoken by a tiny minority of mostly educated people many of non-cornish extraction and not resident in the Duchy. In 2000 there were only about 300 fluent speakers of Cornish and perhaps ten times that number able to conduct a simple conversation in the revived language (MacKinnon 2000: 20). Eleven years later, the UK Census 2011 reported 600 people in England and Wales whose main language is Cornish, 500 of them in Cornwall, that is to say, only one person out of 1,000 inhabitants of the Duchy (Office for National

³³Williams' long time adversary appears to have retired from the fray, his Wikipedia entry signing off 'George took early retirement in 2006, and has recently been learning Japanese.' <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ken_George>, accessed 10 September 2015.

Statistics 2013: 7). Through bilingual signage, and promotional use of Cornish, most of the population of Cornwall are nevertheless aware of the existence of the language, with 92 percent of the sample polled claiming knowledge of its renewed presence and 5.7 percent claiming detailed knowledge (PFA Research 2007, quoted into Ferdinand 2013: 216). In the same poll, 31.8 percent of the participants showed themselves favourable to the promotion of Cornish while 9.9 percent of the total *strongly* support it. The group opposed to the promotion of Cornish is also considerable, at about 20 percent, although the majority of the population expressed indifference to the issue of the language. Efforts to promote the language began to show some progress when on 2 March 2000, the United Kingdom signed the Council of Europe Charter on Regional and Minority Languages, which aims to protect and promote the regional and minority languages of Europe for the contribution they make to Europe's cultural diversity and historical traditions and to avoid as far as possible their extinction. On 5 November 2002 the British Government announced its decision to recognise Cornish as falling under Part II (Article 7) of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. This recognition involved a degree of official status for the language for the first time in history, although it does not mean that Cornish is by any means an official language in Cornwall. This has partially solved the problem of financing, allowing larger sums of money to be made available for the preservation and promotion of the language than formerly. This fund is channelled through the Cornwall Council. The new status for the Cornish language opened the way in 2004 to the development of a *Strategy for the Cornish Language* designed by government entities and by some language and cultural organizations

The objectives of the strategy included appointing a dedicated officer to develop the detailed implementation plans and the setting-up of a group to oversee the production of the strategy document to monitor progress and compliance with the Charter. The tangible result was the setting up in 2005 of *Maga Kernow*, the Cornish Language Partnership, which acts as a referee official institution in all matters related to the promotion and preservation of

the Cornish language. In November 2009, the Cornwall Council adopted a new language policy, implementing the process that began at the beginning of the new millennium. With that decision, the Council recognized the Cornish language as a unique cultural asset and accepted responsibility for safeguarding and promoting it in accordance with the principles laid down in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. This recognition takes the following forms:

- 1) implementing a system of bilingual signage for street and place names and providing new and replacement signs;
- 2) including the language in all future Council publications and promotional literature, such as the Council website;
- 3) ensuring the availability of Cornish language material to the public; and
- 4) considering additional ways to incorporate Cornish in the different departments of the entity.

Recognition of Cornish as a minority language has also been symbolically present in the British Parliament, when four of the MPs for Cornwall swore their Oaths of Allegiance in Cornish in May 2010 (Ferdinand 2013: 217).

Cornish has no official status to date within the education system and has yet to secure a place in the curriculum. If the final objective of the language movement is to restore Cornish as the vernacular of the Cornish people, that goal remains a distant one. As George conceded, 'This long-term objective is unlikely to be achieved in the foreseeable future, though it would be brought nearer if Cornish were to be made available as a proper subject to all schoolchildren in Cornwall' (George and Broderick 2008:759).

According to Renkó-Michelsén (2013: 194-5), Revived Cornish has passed the four lower stages of Fishman's GIDS scale discussed in chapter 2. It has fulfilled the core requirements of Stages 8, 7, 6 and 5, while the criteria of the further stages have not or have only partly been achieved. She encourages revivalists to channel most their resources into aiding informal

oral interaction among the young and within the family in order to secure the most crucial factor of the survival of Cornish, which is intergenerational transmission. If this stage is fully achieved, the progress will have been remarkable, but as will be argued below, it is questionable whether sporadic instances of intergenerational transmission, among a numerically small and scattered community, will be sufficient to reach that critical mass of neo-Cornish speakers upon which its long-term survival depends.

Chapter 5 Language Death on the Isle of Man

5. 0. Introduction

The Isle of Man lies in the Irish Sea, approximately equidistant from England, Ireland and Scotland. Approximately fifty kilometres long, and twenty-five kilometres wide at its broadest point, its varied scenery is largely mountainous in the south, with the highest peak, Snaefell, reaching 620 metres above sea level. The northernmost part of the island consists of a plain. Its population of 84,500 (2011 census), less than half of which was born on the island, inhabits nearly 572 sq. km., about half concentrated in its capital Douglas on the eastern coast. Other major towns are Peel, Castletown and Ramsey.

A salient peculiarity of the The Isle of Man is that though one of the larger British Isles, it does not form part of the United Kingdom, but is rather a semi-autonomous polity, a status shared by Jersey and Guernsey. Officially a Crown dependency, the Lord of Man is the present queen. The island has no representation in Westminster, its self-government the responsibility of its directly elected legislative assembly, the Tynwald. The legal system is based on English principles and its currency backed by the United Kingdom; its fiscal regime has traditionally been attractive to outside investment. Constitutional anomalies aside, Man's principal cultural idiosyncrasy has been the survival until the twentieth century of its own Celtic language, Manx.

'The Isle of Man is above all things Celtic to this day. All kinds of invasions and incursions have happened since the time the Celtic invasion of the British Isles reached Man and through it all it remains staunchly Celtic, as Celtic as Wild Wales, or Brittany, or the Highlands of Scotland' (Stenning 1958: 34). This affirmation of Celtic continuity, of a robust loyalty and enduring tradition, might conveniently serve the interests of the Manx tourist industry and indeed underpins a strand of the revivalist movement but will not bear

serious scrutiny. The reality, in all but place-names, is somewhat different.³⁴ What Trevelyan (1959: 59) writes of Scotland, might equally apply to the Isle of Man, that its history ‘is largely the history of the process of Anglicising the Celt.’ This process, begun later than in Scotland, was more rapid and far-reaching. In linguistic terms, it can be said to have reached a terminal point with the death in 1974 of the last native speaker, or, as will be argued below, with the demise of the last community in which Manx was regularly used as a medium of expression.

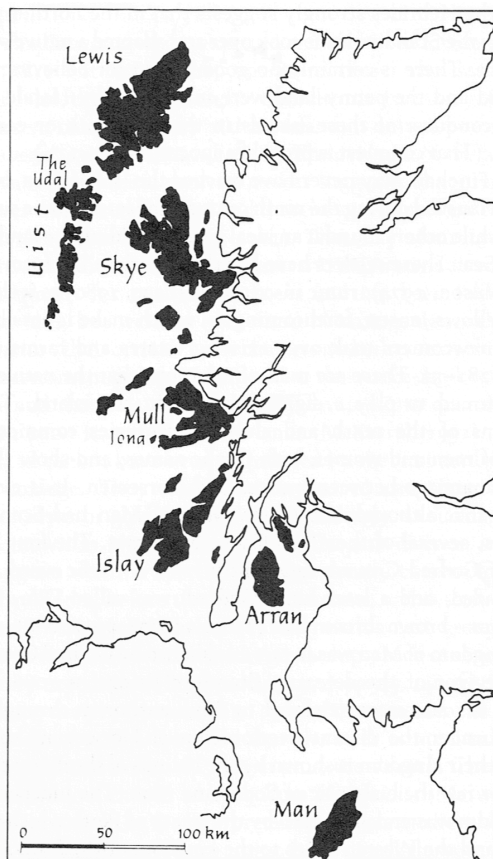
No precise date can be assigned to the arrival of the Celts in Britain, but it is generally believed that Ireland was Celticized directly from Gaul, although it may have been already partly settled from Britain. Old Irish is thought to have been brought to the unromanized Isle of Man by missionaries and settlers in the fifth and sixth centuries CE, where it supplanted a language of the P-Celtic group. Goidelic, or Q-Celtic, languages are represented by Irish, and its two colonial varieties, Manx and Scottish Gaelic. It is as well at the outset, then, before discussing language’s decline and disappearance, to point out that Manx is the product as well as the victim of language shift. In Scotland in particular, the expansion of Goidelic was responsible for the death of Pictish.

5.1. The Norse Occupation

The strategic location of Man in the middle of the North Irish Sea, astride major sea routes, made it vulnerable to Viking depredations from the later 790s. It was also an ideal base from which to mount raids on Ireland. By 850

³⁴ It should be admitted the considerable number of Celtic patronymics in the present-day Manx population, a relatively high proportion of which begin with the <k> or <q>, an early abbreviation of Scottish and Irish *Mac* - ‘son of’. Quilliam, for instance, corresponds to Scottish ‘MacWilliam’. Thus the surnames of the literary critic Frank Kermode (MacDiamaid, ‘son of Diarmaid’) and the linguist Sir Randolph Quirk (‘son of Heart’), both natives of the Island, and the philosopher W. van O. Quine (‘son of Counsel’), are all Manx in origin.

raiding had become settlement, possibly as much through dynastic marriages as through conquest. The Norse occupation of the Isle, nominally subject to the Norwegian Crown, was to last almost four hundred years and firmly established Scandinavian administration and cultural customs. Indeed the present-day Court of Tynwald is a direct descendant of the ‘thing’ of the early settlers (<Thingvollr meaning field of the assembly). Under Godred Crovan, a survivor of the Battle of Stamford Bridge in 1066, Man became the centre of the ‘Kingdom of Man and the Isles’, that is, the hundreds of islands and islets (administratively only thirty-two) making up the outer and inner Hebrides. The extent to which the island’s inhabitants became assimilated socially and linguistically into Norse culture has been the subject of considerable debate.



Robinson and McCarrol posit a rigidly hierarchical society, with Norse as the official language used by the dominant class and Gaelic remaining ‘the language of the servants, conquered Celtic slaves, and women’ (1990: 134). Expressed in functional terms, Norse was probably ‘the language of the *thing* and of tribunals and taxation, while proto-Manx was the language of the pillow, kitchen and farm’.³⁵

However, the evidence for intermarriage (in the occurrence of Norse and Celtic names on cross-slabs of the tenth century) militates against

³⁵ M. Dolley, ‘The palimpsest of Viking settlement on Man’, *Proceedings of the Eighth Viking Congress*, 1977, ed. H. Bekker-Nielson, P. Foote and O. Olsen. Odense, 1981.

any highly rigid dichotomy.³⁶

Crawford (1987: 174) sees in the remarkable series of pagan graves in Man evidence of a warrior aristocracy settled in the island in the ninth century. Assuming they did not bring their womenfolk with them, ‘there must have been a rapid amalgamation with the native population’ and it is to this mixed Norse Celtic culture that the cross-slabs testify. The mingling of Norse and Celt gave rise to the Gall-Ghoidhil (Foreign Gaels), traditionally recognized as the origin of the name of south-western Scottish county of Galloway, due north from Man.³⁷ Thomson (1983) sees two factors, the continuation of a large number of Norse place-names in anglicized form, and the impoverishment of Manx vocabulary (with the near absence of Norse loan-words) as arguing for a horizontal class division, with an upper class of predominantly Norse origin but intermarried with Gaels and bilingual, and a lower class consisting of a more purely Gaelic-speaking tenantry and peasantry. Crucially for the future of the language, this lower class is thought to have remained undisturbed throughout a period of frequent changes in sovereignty and allegiance at the top of the social pyramid. Manx thus became established as the vernacular of the Island, functionally restricted and displaced at an early period from the domains of public administration and justice. When Norse declined following the transfer of the Island to Scottish

³⁶ A long runic inscription on the tenth century Gaut’s cross-slab at Michael, reads ‘Melbrigdi, son of Athakan the smith, erected this cross for his sin soul, but Gaut made it and all in Man’. Melbrigdi and Athakan are Celtic names while Gaut, whose father Bjarn came from Coll (an island in the Inner Hebrides) is Norse. Crawford (1987:175)

³⁷ According to Kinvig, Norse had scarcely any effect on Manx (1975:68) Sommerfelt, however, basing himself on Marstrander, claims the influence was far-reaching. In particular, he sees the Gall-Ghoidhil as instrumental in the assimilation of Norse linguistic elements. Norse influence is thought to explain the devoicing of the ancient voiced stops b, d, g, in internal and final position in Scottish and Manx Gaelic, as opposed to Irish, which retains the full range. Alf Sommerfelt, ‘The Norse Influence on Irish and Scottish Gaelic’ in *The Impact of the Scandanavian Invasions on the Celtic-speaking Peoples c.800-1100 A.D.*, Introductory papers read at Plenary Sessions of the International Congress of Celtic Studies, Dublin, 6-10 July, 1959, ed. Brian O Cuiv, Instituid Ard-Léinn Bhaille Atha Cliath, Dublin, 1975.

sovereignty after the Treaty of Perth in 1266 (the last King of Man, Magnus, had died in 1265), its place was taken not by a resurgent and emergent Manx³⁸ but by the languages of the new overlords, first Latin and French and then English. Manx survived Norse domination, but in the absence of a Gaelic-speaking aristocracy as a source of patronage, it survived fatally weakened. As Thomson writes,

‘The Gaelic in Man became simply the language of the peasantry, unused for any but everyday mundane concerns, and so ceasing to maintain in use all that related to traditional learning and literature. Despite a late flowering for religious purposes in the eighteenth century, Manx can be said never to have recovered from the blow to its social standing inflicted probably during the Norse period, most certainly repeated in the centuries following.’
(1983: 174)

5.2. Anglicization

Scottish hegemony over the Isle of Man was short-lived. A dynastic crisis precipitated by Alexander III’s death in a riding accident in 1285 allowed Edward I to assert his claim and take possession. There followed seventy years of dispute in which a succession of English and Scottish Lords were granted the Island by their respective monarchs. Defeat at the battle of Neville’s Cross in 1346 put paid to Scottish pretensions, and in 1405, in exchange for token homage to Henry IV and his successors, Man was handed over to the Stanley lords of Knowsley (near Liverpool). Three hundred years of relative stability ensued, with the Stanleys serving as Kings of Man until 1504 and Lords until 1736. From 1736 to 1765 Man was under the control of the anglicized Dukes of Atholl.

³⁸ It is to this period of Scottish and English overlordship that Manx evolves from Irish as a distinct language (Brodrick 1999).

Although we have no direct knowledge of Manx before the sixteenth century, we can assume a largely monoglot and illiterate population living in feudal subordination. The language would have been universal among the general population but not shared by the highest social stratum, whose own language enjoyed greater prestige. The island was virtually sealed from contact with the outside world and tenants were forbidden to leave it without special permission. Constant watch was kept against incursions from Scotland. The effect on the language was to isolate it from the dialects of the rest of Gaeldom.

Whereas the Island had been on the circuit of peripatetic bards and singers, bearers of the old culture common to the whole of Gaeldom, Man now lost contact with its neighbours to the west and north as they ceased to find patrons on the Island. (Stephans 1976: 109)

As far as the gentry are concerned, anglicizing influences were at work throughout the seventeenth century. In Speed's *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain* of 1627, we read

The wealthier sort, and such as hold the fairest possessions doe imitate the people of Lancashire, both in their honest carriage and good house-keeping. Howbeit the common sort of people both in their language and in their habits come nighest unto the Irish. (after Harrison 1871: 37-38)

James, the Seventh Earl of Derby and Lord of Mann (1627 to 1643), encouraged young Manxmen to attend university in England. Plans to establish a university on the island itself were frustrated by the English Civil War (Stowell 2005: 387). English-medium schools were set up in each parish by Isaac Barrow, the bishop and governor of Man (1663 -1671) and church ministers obliged to teach in them. For those aspiring to higher education, a grammar school was set up in Castleton in 1676. The prevailing belief was

that use of Manx in churches hindered the appreciation and understanding of the scriptures, although church ministers were nevertheless expected to be able to use it, given that at that time over sixty percent of the population of the island knew no other language. The first book to be published in Manx (in 1707), a translation of *The Principles and Duties of Christianity*, known in Manx as *Coyrle Sodjey* [Further Advice], undertaken by Thomas Wilson (1698-1755), who became Bishop of Mann in 1698, arguably evinces a certain tolerance and pragmatism towards the language. It was nevertheless Wilson's policy to enjoin all Manx parents under penalty of fines to send their children to school to learn English.

The 1695 edition of Camden's *Britannia* conceivably describes a situation of transitional bilingualism in which the gentry are beginning to dissociate themselves from the vernacular:

Their Gentry are very courteous and affable, and are more willing to discourse with one in English than in their own language.
(Harrison 1871: 18)

5. 3. The Eighteenth Century

The incipient language shift evident in the seventeenth century was retarded in the following century by a number of factors, among them economic stagnation, poor communications and a limited degree of recognition granted to the language by the clergy. In 1726 town-dwellers numbered only 2,530, or 17 percent of the Island's population. The rural poor still lived in primitive turf-built cottages and engaged in subsistence farming.

Religious services outside the towns continued to be held almost entirely in Manx, despite the lack of a Manx translation of the Bible until 1763, and education as an overtly anglicising medium was largely ineffectual. Bishop Wilson's *History*, written early in the eighteenth century, reports that 'English is not understood by two-thirds at least of the Island, though there is an

English school in every parish, *so hard is it to change the language of a whole country*' (emphasis added) (Harrison 1871: 111). The presupposition of this last observation is that the eradication of Manx was a desirable though not easily achieved outcome. Wilson's successor as Bishop of Sodor and Man, Bishop Hildesley (1755-72) was more sympathetic and it was during his episcopate that Manx for the first time became a medium of instruction in schools. This in part stemmed from the recognition that it was nonsensical for children to be taught in a language few of them could understand. Thus teaching materials were provided and the clergy were actively encouraged to cultivate the language. Hildesley asks in a letter concerning a young curate:

Has he made a Manx sermon yet? If he has not 'tis fit he should; unless he is one of those geniuses of the South, who think the cultivation of that language unnecessary. This, I believe, is the only country in the world, that is ashamed of, and even inclined to extirpate, if it could, its own native tongue (quoted in Thomson 1969: 208).

In 1757 only three parishes were using Manx as a medium of instruction. By 1766 the Catechism and prayers were taught through the medium of Manx in all the parishes in the island except one (Broderick 1999:17). The publication of the full Bible translated into Manx (1763-73), which was Hildesley's project, was less an index of the buoyancy and standing of the language than a product of individual enthusiasm and initiative.³⁹ What might retrospectively be described as an attitude of enlightened accommodation was short-lived. Following Hildesley's death in 1772, Anglican support for Manx-medium instruction in schools was withdrawn, and by 1782 English had become the main language of instruction in all but five schools on the island. There was to be a brief reintroduction of Manx in Sunday Schools in the 1820s but in 1825 the main supplier of Manx language religious material, the SPCK (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge) was informed by a

³⁹ Much as was later to be the case with William Lorimer's 'New Testament in Scots', published posthumously in 1983.

hostile Bishop Murray there was no longer any need for such material and indeed that the teaching of Manx had been prohibited by an Act of Westminster, a assertion that was no less effective for being false (Broderick 1999).

The advent of Methodism into Man during the 1770s saw a reappraisal of the language as a potential medium of conversion. Several religious tracts were published in Manx towards the end of the century under the aegis of the Methodists, including a hymn-book and a mass of religious verse called *carvals*⁴⁰ or carols, but again the motivation was strictly pragmatic. John Wesley himself, who visited the Island in 1777 and 1783, approved of the Manx, noting in his journal that ‘a more loving simple-hearted people than this I never saw. And no wonder; for there are but six papists and no dissenters in the Island’. He was less than kindly disposed to the language: ‘I exceedingly disapprove of your publishing anything in the Manx language. On the contrary, we should do everything in our power to abolish it from the earth’ he wrote to one of his Manx preachers in 1789 (quoted in Gregor 1980: 296). Despite this personal antipathy, Wesley’s call to arms went unheeded but a number of impersonal agencies were already working towards the desired demise. During the early 18th century a trade in wine, tea, tobacco and other commodities had grown up between the Isle of Man and England, Scotland and Ireland. The Manx traders obtained these goods abroad and sold them on the mainland, having paid a lower rate of duty. A practice the British government regarded as smuggling, the Manx saw as legitimate trade. It attracted increasing numbers of merchants to the Isle of Man, which in turn led to the growth of the towns, especially Douglas, and greater use of English.

The suppression of this lucrative trade by means of the Act of Revestment, known as *Yn Chialg Vooar* [The Great Deception], which transferred

⁴⁰These comprise an extensive corpus of some 20-25,000 lines of original Manx verse, mostly on religious themes and arranged in a series of songs averaging around 35 stanzas each. They were sung in parish churches initially, then in the Methodist chapels on Christmas Eve.

sovereignty of the island from the Duke of Atholl to the British Crown, depressed the Manx economy and provoked large-scale emigration (over 1000 in 1765 alone)⁴¹. Recovery at the end of the century had the social concomitant of Irish and English in-migration.

The decline of Manx results not so much from rigorous action against it from within, but from a set circumstances emanating from without. Until the mid-eighteenth century Man had little contact with the outside world. Given its small population and resources external trade and contact can hardly have been all that great anyway, and English was therefore unnecessary to people outside the small towns, where it was spoken alongside Manx without displacing it. There was little incentive or reason for outsiders to come to Man, and so everyday contact between town and country areas was important and Manx would need to be used. The impetus in the direction of English came ca. early/mid-18th century, largely as a result of the ‘running trade’ from which many Manx people profited (Broderick 1999: 23).

5.4. The Nineteenth Century: ‘an iceberg floating in southern latitudes’.

The nineteenth century was one of accelerating language shift. Industrialization (of the mining sector) and mass tourism (from 1829 onwards, and particularly after 1833 when a regular ferry service was

⁴¹ Of the Manx people who emigrated to America, a significant number settled in Ohio. Many continued to speak Manx as their everyday language and some even acquired their Manx in America. Approximately 30,000 of the present-day residents of Cleveland are of Manx origin, and that Manx was used as a community language in Ohio and parts of Pennsylvania until the early twentieth century. Other destinations for emigration were Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand (Ager 2009: 18).

established) together with progressive urbanization and emigration, all contributed to the weakening and recession of Manx.

Demographic shifts and their psycho-social corollary cannot be unrelated to O Murchu's calculation (1985: 165) that 'children born in the 1850s were, with very few exceptions, the last to acquire Manx naturally'. There is considerable evidence in contemporary observations to support a marked shift away from Manx in this period. Cregeen, in his preface to his Manx dictionary of 1835, writes of the state of the language as 'despised and neglected' (Cregeen 1835: iii). In 1848 'the Manx is spoken generally in the mountain districts of the Isle of Man, and in the north-western parishes. There are, however, few persons (perhaps none of the young) who know no English' (Cumming 1848: 325). The following year Rosser quotes the note of a parish clergyman: 'The language is getting rapidly into disuse. The rising generation will not speak it' (Rosser 1849: 17). Most telling of all is Gill's preface to Kelly's Manx Grammar of 1859:

The decline of the spoken Manx, within the memory of the present generation, has been marked. The language is no longer heard in our courts of law, either from the bench or the bar, and seldom from the witness box [...]. In our churches the language was used by many of the present generation of clergy three Sundays in every month. It was afterwards restricted to every other Sunday; and is now entirely discontinued in most of the churches. In the schools throughout the Island the Manx has ceased to be taught; and the introduction of the government system of education has done much to displace the language. It is rarely now heard in conversation, except among the peasantry. It is a doomed language, an iceberg floating in southern latitudes. (Gill 1859: v)

It is remarkable, given these premonitions of imminent extinction, that the language was to survive another hundred and fifteen years. Its protracted end,

however, owes less to stubborn language loyalties than to quirks of longevity and upbringing. Ned Madrell, the last native Manx-speaker, was brought up largely by a member of his grandparents' generation and outlived his own non-Manx-speaking generation by twenty years, dying at the age ninety-seven. Moreover, language is primarily a social phenomenon and as such dies with the demise of a linguistic community. Whatever their purely linguistic value as informants, isolated last speakers are, in a sense, a sociolinguistically irrelevant *nachleben* of the language. The last Manx-speaking community, that of Creagneash, on the southern tip of the Island, disintegrated in the 1920s, seventy years or one lifetime after 1850. There is therefore good reason to locate the final collapse of Manx Gaelic, not in the period 1901-21 (Price 1984: 81), but in the two decades from 1840 to 1860 when it virtually ceased to be transmitted to the next generation. Biological metaphors once again come to mind. If the last surviving pair of an animal species fail to reproduce, then the species is doomed, although the individuals may live out their natural lives.

That the Manx Education Act of 1872 made no provision for the language is in a sense an irrelevance and not to be connected causally with the decline of the language. Had provision been made, it would have been in the context of (a then probably highly unpopular) language revival.

The first survey to give a detailed assessment of the numbers of Manx speakers was carried out by Henry Jenner in 1875.⁴² Jenner sent a questionnaire to the clergy of each parish with the aim of discovering whether Manx or English was the prevailing language of the parish and how many people spoke Manx as a 'mother tongue'. The results of Jenner's survey (which excludes the Island's capital Douglas) give a total of 12,340 Manx speakers out of a population of 41,084 (30 percent), of whom 109 Manx were monolingual, 0.5 percent of the population excluding Douglas. However, Jenner added a note of caution with regard to the number of

⁴² <http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/history/manks/jenner.htm>

speakers recorded:

Of course these statistics can hardly be taken to represent a perfect linguistic census of the Island, and it would be very difficult to obtain such a thing by answers from different people, as each man (as regards my second question at any rate) would have his own standards to judge by and I am very sure that the standards vary considerably. Still I think they may be said to give a fair approximate view of the philological state of the Isle of Man in the year 1875 (Jenner 1875:14).

The second question asked how many people spoke Manx as a ‘mother tongue’; the tabulated answers listed the number of people who ‘speak Manx habitually’ (presumably as a mother tongue though not stated as such). The question was worded ‘How many persons speak Manx as their mother tongue?’, therefore the number of Manx speakers must be presumed to refer to individuals not households. The figures given refer to those collected by the clergy and not the individuals to whom Jenner may or may not have spoken to when he visited the Island some months later – these are not included in his statistics. No distinction is made regarding gender, but there is a question relating to ‘language spoken by children’ but without any numerical information merely ‘English only’, ‘English and Manx’, and ‘English and a little Manx’. Jenner divided the Island into the North and South Districts, with eight and nine parishes respectively. In four out of the eight North District parishes the children were described as speaking ‘English and a little Manx’, and in one parish ‘English and Manx’. In the South District English and Manx were spoken in one out of the nine parishes. Children in the remaining parishes of both North and South Districts were recorded as speaking English only.

Jenner’s survey results also included comments by the local clergy. The following comment was made by the Rector of Kirk Andreas: ‘Children pick up a little Manx when they leave school. Old people, so to speak, “dream in Manx.” Servants like to keep it up as a class language not understood by their

masters.’ And from the Vicar of St. George’s, Douglas: ‘In the country parishes one finds three generations in one cottage. The old speaking Manx only, the middle Manx and English, and the children English only.’

5. 5. The Twentieth Century: Nil by mouth

This classic pattern presages the decline in speakers that became apparent in the 1901 census, by which time the number of Manx speakers had fallen to 4,419. It is evident that Manx had lost its domain as the main language of the home and family by the turn of the century. The older generation of Manx speakers was not being replaced by younger speakers. From 1901 onwards the decline in speakers continued, dropping to its lowest point in 1946 with a total of 20 Manx speakers. In Jenner’s view, Manx was:

now almost exactly in the same state that Cornish was in at the time at which Edward Lhuyd wrote his *Archaeologia Britannica* (1709), and though that survived in a sort of way for another century, for all purposes of conversation it was dead in less than half that time. The only public or official recognitions of Manx at present are the solitary monthly service at Kirk Arbory; the promulgation of the “Acts of Tynwald” in Manx and English, without which they do not become law; and the carol singing of “Oie’l Vorrey.” How long these will last it is hard to say; but there is a decided feeling on the part of the people, especially among the Manx speakers themselves, that the language is only an obstruction, and that the sooner it is removed the better.

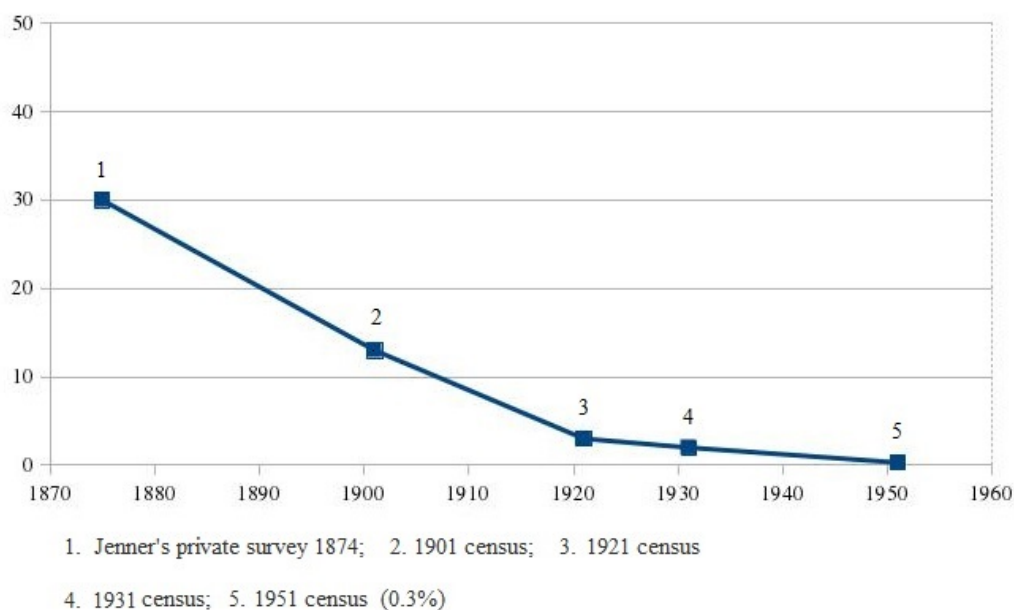


Figure 12: Census and other evidence for Manx Gaelic decline.

Census returns for 1901 (with the town-dwelling population discounted), when plotted against Jenner's survey and the 1921 census, reveal a linear decline in the percentage of Manx speakers as the last generation died off. In the urban centres, 6.5 percent spoke Manx in 1901, 1.3 percent in 1921. A careful survey just after the Second World war showed that only a score of native speakers were then left, all elderly people who had used Manx in their childhoods with parents or grandparents, but had scarcely ever spoken it since. These were in all probability 'semi-speakers'.⁴³ When the Celtic scholar, Kenneth Jackson, visited the Island in 1950, there were only ten

⁴³The term 'native speaker' enjoys semi-technical status in linguistics to refer to speakers whose intuitions about a particular language are most to be relied on because they had acquired that language naturally during childhood. The term 'last native-speaker' is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is not at all certain that these speakers reach a level of competence that can be designated 'native'. In the terminal stages of transitional bilingualism, the dominant language is acquired natively whereas with the obsolescent language it is questionable whether it is fully acquired at all. Secondly, the speech community itself may not agree on who belongs to it. Watson prefaces his essay on Scottish and Irish Gaelic with a warning to the researcher about speaker self-identification: '[S]ome people may may claim speaker status when others would not accept them as such; some may say they are not speakers when others would include them as speakers.' (1989: 41)

speakers left, whose average age was eighty-five.⁴⁴ These were scattered throughout the Island (Manx never having had a geographically compact *Gaidhealteacht*) and spoke Manx, insofar as they could remember it, only to visiting Celticists and tape recorders. It had been some sixty years since they had used the language in everyday communication and the Manx these speakers were able to recall they described themselves as ‘scrappy’ and ‘rusty’. On Fishman’s 8-stage GIDS (Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale) for an endangered languages (Fishman 1991), this is effectively the final and near-irreversible stage, one in which language documentation can be the urgent response. All but one of these speakers had died by the end of the decade.

5. 6. Language Attitudes and Language Use

Attitudes to language are related to use insofar as they are dictated by pragmatic considerations, that is to say, by what the speaking of a language achieves materially and in terms of social advancement for the speaker. Crudely expressed, languages may be seen as instruments for maximising material well-being, and those that fail in this regard tend to be disparaged and eventually discarded. There is thus a high correlation between negative attitudes and languages displaced from this vital function. This may seem a reductionist caricature. Certainly, the abandonment of a language may pose painful dilemmas and evoke regret and ambivalence, as the place of a cherished traditional language is usurped by one more ‘progressive’, but where the language has been habitually used in a context of hardship and poverty (from which the competing variety seems to offer release), then it is fair to say that it is not fondly remembered. In languages confined to rural areas the negative association of the dying language with an unwanted past is particularly common. Nova Scotia Gaelic, for instance, moribund since the 1930s, was reported by one observer to be the language of ‘toil, hardship and

⁴⁴Broderick (2011: 5), on the basis of an extensive analysis of extant phonetic transcriptions and tape-recordings, typifies these speakers as Terminal speakers, broadly categories II to V described for Breton by Dressler (1981).

scarcity' whereas English was the 'medium of refinement and culture'(Edwards 1994: 107).

Similarly, Irish has been considered by its own native speakers as a language of 'penury, drudgery and backwardness' (ibid.). Uselessness is also a common charge. Typical of the attitude of speakers of receding languages is that reported by Rouchdy in her study of Egyptian Nubian (1989:100): 'He thought that Nubian is a language with no importance in society, with no advantage to learning it.' A native speaker of East Sutherland Gaelic reported that she had not taught the language to her children because 'Gaelic's no use to you in the world' (Dorian 1982: 46). The dying language may also be thought a hindrance in the acquisition of an unmarked form of the dominant language (the so-called 'bilingual deficit' theory). It is of course inconvenient for the revivalists that operate from outside the community itself to acknowledge that a language they consider a unique spiritual treasure is often felt by native speakers to be no more than a millstone round their necks.⁴⁵

Attitudes towards Manx were almost universally negative. George Borrow, collecting notes for a book on the Isle of Man in 1856, reported that 'many people were ashamed to speak Manx' (after Gregor 1980: 295). In a letter dated 1883, a visitor noted that 'There can be no doubt that the Manx people are thoroughly ashamed of their language. They say, and, of course, with truth, that it is of no use to them, either for advancement in life or for the acquisition of the most ordinary information.' The language is 'constantly ridiculed by their English visitors'; that those who 'habitually use Manx were

⁴⁵Naturally, this is not invariably the case. In particular, language loyalty may be powerfully bolstered by religious associations. The link between Scottish Gaelic and the Free Church of Scotland has been a strong force in language maintenance. The religious tone and cadence in the following observation is unmistakeable: 'The one who is taught the Gaelic acquires knowledge of wisdom and an understanding of truth and honour which will guide his steps along the paths of righteousness, and will stay with him for the rest of his life. The Gaelic is a powerful, spiritual language and Gaels who are indifferent to it are slighting their forefathers and kinsmen'. (D. Campbell and R. MacClean, *Beyond the Atlantic Roar: A Study of the Highland Scots* Toronto: MacClellan & Stewart, 1974: 178)

spoken of with contempt by the other Manx people of their own class who used English only.’ The sole monoglot Manx speaker known to him was regarded as something of a novelty and the object of visitor curiosity (Ager 2009: 19). Jenner (1875: 195) notes that ‘there was decided feeling on the part of the people that, especially among the Manx-speakers themselves, the language is only an obstruction, and the sooner it is removed the better.’

The replies to Jenner’s questionnaire provide interesting evidence of monostylism and intergenerational switching. The rector of Kirk Andreas, for example, reports that ‘servants like to keep it up as a class language not understood by their masters.’ Another replies that ‘in the country parishes one finds three generations in one cottage: the old speaking Manx only, the middle Manx and English, and the children English only. (Jenner 1875: 192-3). Typically, women are more conscious of linguistic prestige than men and instigate the switch for the supposed benefit of their children. On a visit to the Island in 1893, the Celticist Sir John Rhys surprised a group of fishermen conversing together in Manx: ‘Such is their wont, I learn, when they are out of doors, but when they enter their houses they talk English to their wives and children, and in this conflict of tongues it is safe to say the wives and children have it’ (Rhys 1894: ix).

Nothing could be more emblematic of language attitudes to Manx than the case of its last native speaker. In the corpus collected by Broderick (1984 vol.1: 3-17), Ned Maddrell declares

‘Cha row my vummig as my yishig rieu loayrt monney Gaelg kiongoyrt rooin, ach ren mish geddyn eh woish shenn naunt. [My mother and father never used to speak Gaelic in front of us, but I got from an old aunt]

At his funeral in 1974 not a word of Manx was said or sung, at the express request of his family. Rather than a failed struggle to survive, the disappearance of Manx was a death-wish fulfilled. A saying from the 1880s sums up the disdain felt by many Manx speakers towards their language in its

latter stages, *cha jean oo cosney ping lesh y Ghailck* [you will not earn a penny from Manx] (Broderick, 1999: 13).

5.7. Causes of Decline

The geographic, social and numerical decline of the Celtic languages has been ascribed by Gregor (1980: 284-341) to a series of factors, notably disunity, loss of status, shortage of reading matter, lack of instruction in school and university, loss of language in religious life, immigration, emigration, the impact of newspapers, cinema, radio and television and State antipathy to minority languages. Durkacz (1983: 216-26) has stressed the role of education and the market-place, and pointed to the long period of cultural and psychological disfavour that paved the way for the rapid surrender of Gaelic to English in Scotland.

To a greater or lesser extent the evidence of Manx would support most of these claims. The mass media arrived too late on the scene to be a factor but certainly there was never a Manx newspaper or much reading matter of any description. It is doubtful, in any case, whether it would significantly have retarded the decline. Literacy when it is mediated through the dominant language, as it almost invariably is, becomes itself an agent of language shift. The town-dwelling population was never Manx-speaking and, in its eyes, the language could not be dissociated from an indigent and backward peasant class. This uneven social distribution is a constant in the histories of the six Celtic languages. Manx, like the others, was never anything but a rural language, and in a century such as the nineteenth, notorious for rural depopulation and disruption, it inevitably suffered.

Emigration, variously attributed by the Douglas newspapers to crop failure, poor herring catches and ecclesiastical tithes, was a constant throughout the century, as it was in Ireland and the Highlands of Scotland (with similarly disastrous effects on their respective languages). In March and April 1827 alone, 1,200 people out of a resident population of 12-15,000 left the north of the Island for North America or the mainland (Robinson and McCarrol 1990:

145). This must seriously have depleted the Manx-speaking core of the Island.⁴⁶ In-migration too, whether permanent, or seasonal in the form of mass tourism (then in its infancy) from Lancashire and Cheshire, stimulated the ‘modernisation’ of Manx society. The church was committed to Manx for only so long as was necessary; its own English teaching in the parish schools hastened the day when it would be superfluous. The Manx authorities failed to exploit their partial constitutional autonomy to protect the language, making the Isle of Man just as vulnerable as other parts of the British Isles to centralisation and the consequent acculturation and de-ethnicisation of minorities. The low status enjoyed by Manx was exacerbated by a number of factors. Firstly, it lacked a strong cultural tradition, oral or written, to inspire language loyalty. Secondly, the language itself acquired written form through the orthography of English and so to an extent forfeited its autonomy. Thirdly, the geographical distribution of its speakers (living in rural areas, but necessarily close to English-speaking centres, and divided by a central hilly region) did not predispose to the recognition of a single Manx-speaking community.

Numerically, Manx speakers had fallen to levels where the language was unsustainable. Numbers of speakers, though they may not *per se* determine the ability of a group to maintain its language, do have a critical bearing on its success. The ‘critical mass’ of speakers necessary for the survival of a language has received various estimates. Greene (1981: 8) speaks of a quarter of a million. According to Adler, ‘... it can be stated with some confidence that there is not much life left in a language when the number of its speakers falls below the million mark (1977: 2). If this were the case, however, then the 250,000 speakers of Icelandic would feel very threatened. As Edwards writes

⁴⁶The image of the Celtic languages being driven into the Atlantic should be complemented by the historical fact that they were also driven across it, founding in two cases, Patagonia and Cape Breton Island, monolingual communities which survived well over 100 years.

The brutal fact seems to be that, once the numbers and concentration of speakers have fallen below a certain threshold, attempts to stem the decline of the language are extremely difficult. No one knows, of course, what this magic threshold is, but it is obviously very variable, and to a certain extent at least only has meaning within given geographical and political space' (1994: 109).

Arguably more important is who speaks the language, and not how many. Nevertheless, the smaller the size of the community the greater the threat of language shift and death. Large minority groups are better able to make themselves prominent and mobilize themselves in their own defence.

By 1871, when 25 percent returned themselves as Manx-speaking, Manx was already virtually irretrievable. Such were the external pressures on the community to give up its language that a chain reaction came into play. In a bilingual situation with a complimentary distribution of domains, where there is a steady shrinkage of the threatened in favour of the dominant language, a shift takes place in community's primary language. Speakers then feel sufficiently socially and economically penalised to want to withhold the recessive language from their children.⁴⁷ The process is accelerated by formal linguistic phenomena – changes in the phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon – that follow from stylistic shrinkage and imperfect transmission. This impoverishment, or “bastardisation”, then feeds negatively back into the attitudes adopted towards the abandoned language. There then ensues a period of language decay, defined as the serious linguistic disintegration typical of the speech of semi-speakers, before the language is abandoned entirely. Whatever its various residues and substratum influences, when a point is reached whereby the language ceases to be used for regular communication, the language has to all intents and purposes died. In the case

⁴⁷Sasse (1992:13) describes Primary Language Shift (PLT) as ‘triggered by the decisions of [members of] a speech community to cease to transmit their language to their descendants. The result is an interruption in language transmission (LT)’

of Manx, this scenario was played out in the middle decades of the nineteenth century.

Chapter 6: The Revitalization of Manx

6.0. Introduction

The outline of Manx has been likened to an hourglass. For some, the last of the sand slid through the neck of the glass in 1974 and is beyond recall. For others the shape of the glass itself suggests attenuation from the richness of Classical Manx, through to the constriction of ‘Late Manx’ (with its slenderest point reached at the death of Ned Maddrell), then gradually widening out again in the revival. As with twentieth and twenty first century Cornish, the revival is controversial and raises questions of authenticity and continuity from earlier forms. This chapter addresses the history and present state of the revived language.

6.1. The Nineteenth-Century Origins

In the course of nineteenth century a number of dictionaries, grammars and other Manx language material were published, not ostensibly in order to ward off language death but rather to wind up the deceased’s estate with some overdue codification. The Reverend John Kelly (1750-1809) in the introduction to his Manx-English dictionary (written in 1805 but not published until in 1866) seems not to find anything inherently undesirable about the loss of the Celtic languages:⁴⁸

⁴⁸Kelly was born in Baldwin, Isle of Man and educated at Douglas Grammar School and subsequently at Cambridge University. Before he was seventeen, he undertook the task of writing a grammar of Manx, on the basis of his observation of native speech and the gospel of St Matthew published by Bishop Thomas Wilson in 1748 (published in 1804). In light of his comments above, it is unsurprising that the grammar is vitiated by his treatment of Manx inflection as though it were Latin. Kelly was also engaged by Hildesley to assist with the task of producing a Manx version of the Bible. While transporting the finished manuscript of much of the Old Testament to the printers in Whitehaven, Kelly was shipwrecked and is said to have saved the manuscript by holding it above the water until he and it were rescued from the sinking ship. An unluckier fate awaited Kelly’s intended *magnum opus*, the triglot dictionary of the three Gaelic languages, with the meanings given in English, largely compiled in the years 1779-90 and proposed for publication in 1805 while

It is true that in process of time this cultivation of the Gaelic language will destroy the language itself, as a living language; but it will have produced the knowledge of a better [language], and will descend to posterity by means of the press in a more perfect state, than if it should have been found only in the conversation of unlettered individuals. There would be no cause for regret, then, that it was not a living language, than there is at present, that the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin are no longer such.

In addition, the extension of Gaelic literacy was seen, perhaps counter-intuitively, to favour the eradication of political and religious dissent: ‘And when there shall be one national language [sc. English], then only will be the union of the empire be completely established’ (quoted after Broderick 1999). This should be seen in the context of 1798 rebellion in Ireland which challenged English rule and Protestant ascendancy in that country and sought to establish a republic. The rising was led by the United Irishmen, a society which subscribed to the same ideals of fraternity and equality that had brought about the American and French revolutions. Once the rising was repressed, the Act of Union was passed (Doyle 2015: 108).

In the nineteenth century, those who wrote Manx language material commonly felt the need to justify their work and to make it clear that their intention was to preserve the language for academic study rather than prolong its life (Broderick 1999). In the introduction to his 1835 English-Manx dictionary, for example, Archibald Cregeen (1835: v) notes that:

I am well aware that the utility of the following work will be variously appreciated by my brother Manksmen. Some will be disposed to deride the endeavour to restore vigour to a decaying language. Those who reckon the extirpation of the Manks a necessary step towards that general extension of

Kelly was vicar of Copford in Essex. A fire in the printer’s shop destroyed the first impression and the project fell into abeyance. Under the aegis of the Manx Society, the Manx-English portion was published together with an English-Manx section in 1866 by the Revd William Gill, vicar of Malew.

the English, which they deem essential to the interest of the Isle of Man, will condemn every effort which seems likely to retard its extinction.

But those will think otherwise who consider that there are thousands of the natives of the Island that can at present receive no useful knowledge whatever, except through the medium of the Manks language; they will judge from experience, as well as from the nature of the case, that no work of this description will hinder the progress of the English, but in fact have the contrary effect. (Cregeen 1835: v)

This may be no more than a rhetorical acknowledgement of the ambivalence felt by much of the educated population of the Island towards Manx. As a *captatio* its effect depends on the publication being interpreted (paradoxically) as a vehicle for the eventual dissemination and advancement of purely English literacy. Cregeen is much less nuanced however in his preface, declaring that it is much to be lamented that ‘a language so venerable for its antiquity’ should be so generally neglected and urging the natives of Mona not to regard it ‘with disgraceful apathy and heartless indifference’.

6.2. The Manx Language Society

The revival as an organized and institutional movement may be said to date from 22 March, 1899 with the founding of *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh* (The Manx Language Society, hereafter YCG), under the presidency of the Speaker of the House of Keys, Arthur W. Moore (1836-1909). *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh* is on the one hand a reflection of the Celtic renaissance, a wide-ranging cultural exercise in retrieval, invention, and assertion that was a feature of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and on the other, a reaction to the marked retreat that Manx had recently sustained, as documented by Henry Jenner. It is also a reaction against the increasingly

invasive popular culture of the mainland and an affirmation of “little Manx” nationhood:⁴⁹

The local establishment, disdainful of working-class holiday makers or “cotton balls” from Lancashire, rediscovered a Celtic ethnicity, defined against the latest commercial popular culture offered in local pleasure palaces and dance halls, the biggest in Europe. However, there was a pragmatic and realistic approach to Gaelic revival, a recognition that the bulk of the Manx population, wise to economic opportunity, had abandoned the language all but irretrievably (Belcham 2000: 228).

Its inception lay in a notice published in 1897 in the local paper in Peel inviting people with an interest in the Manx language to a meeting in the Primitive Old Chapel. There it was decided to hold Manx language classes and to form the *Peel Manx Language Association*. As well as learning the language, people would familiarize themselves with Manx songs and history. Similar classes were started in a number of other towns, including Douglas and Lonan and thus the idea of an island-wide society germinated.

The stated aims of the Society were ample in scope: to encourage interest in the Manx language, history, music, songs, folklore and place names, to cultivate a national spirit, and especially to preserve and collect Manx literature.⁵⁰ Its model was not only the Welsh *Eisteddfod* but the Gaelic

⁴⁹ ‘The Little Manx Nation’ (1891) was the title of a popular history of the Island by Manx novelist, Hall Caine [Sir Thomas Henry Hall Caine] (1853-1931)

⁵⁰ Moore in his presidential address, November 18, 1899, is careful to qualify the implications of the name of the society:

‘Though called the Manx Language Society, it should, I think, by no means confine its energies to the promotion of an interest in the language, but extend them to the study of Manx history, the collection of Manx music, ballads, carols, folklore, proverbs, place-names, including the old field names which are rapidly dying out - in a word, to the preservation of everything that IS distinctively Manx, and, above all, to the cultivation of a national spirit. Let us co-operate cordially with the Guild in its admirable work of encouraging Manx industry, music, and art; with the Antiquarian Society, and the Trustees of Ancient Monuments in their care for the relics of the past, while devoting ourselves more especially to the tasks of preserving and collecting our literature and song. We shall thus form part of an organisation which,

League in Ireland, founded six years previously by a group of enthusiasts in Dublin. One contrast, however, is instructive. In a speech delivered in New York in 1891, the most prominent founder of the League, Douglas Hyde, made a radical call to arms:

Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, if you want to keep Irish alive in your midst there is no way or method to do that but to speak it all the time—all the time, I say, among yourselves. Follow my example, I beseech you. As they said in Old Irish, I'm under injunction, under injunction or under oath, not to speak a single word of English ever, except when I will not be understood in Irish (quoted after Doyle 2015: 177).

It appears that measures of language maintenance were not thought appropriate or feasible in the case of Manx.⁵¹ An account of the Manx Language Society's first general annual meeting published in the Gaelic League's journal *An Claidheamh Soluis* reports a prominent member of the society arguing enthusiastically for the preservation of Manx but objecting strongly to Manx speakers passing the language on to their children (Stowell 2005: 400). The president himself is reported to have acquiesced in the

I trust will in time accomplish for the Isle of Man what the Eisteddfod has done for Wales.' ('The Origin of the Manx Language Society'. Reprinted from the *Isle of Man Examiner* of January 3, 1914 <http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/publshrs/yncg.htm>; accessed March 4, 2013).

⁵¹Pan-Celticists were inclined to concur. A leading article in *Celtia* averred: 'The present nucleus of Manx speakers is small, the percentage being one third or one-fourth of what it is in Ireland. The spelling is uncouth, and out of all relation to the spirit of the language and the larger mass of cognate Gaelic literature. [...] He must be a brave man indeed who would face such odds, with Lancashire sending over its shiploads of objectionable tourists every summer to scour the island, and corrupt the language and manners of the islanders, and laugh away their "old gibberish" of anative tongue!' *Celtia* 1, no. 3 (March 1901): 33-34 (quoted after Belcham 2000: 132-3). Manx delegates, headed by Moore, had been invited to the first Pan-Celtic Congress held in Dublin in 1901.

disappearance of the language while at the same time regretting the necessity of preferring ‘the practical to the sentimental’ (Broderick 1991: 174).⁵²

Preservation, not revernacularization, was to be the primary objective. The decisive linguistic issue was not the revival of Gaelic, but protection of the distinctive Anglo-Manx dialect, the insular vernacular. There were however dissident voices among the membership and some at least argued for the promotion of the spoken language.⁵³ As a result of the YCG’s initiatives, a leading Manx newspaper, *The Manx Examiner*, ran a column in and about Manx (1899-1902) and from 1913 published biannually its own journal *Manin*, dedicated principally to folklore, music and song, until the premature death of its editor in 1917.⁵⁴ Interest in Manx traditional music, songs and

⁵²This attitude is not untypical of an establishment figure with political responsibilities who approaches the language from a scholarly antiquarian perspective. Moore had been educated at Rugby School and Trinity College, Cambridge and learned Manx in adult life. His contribution to Manx cultural and intellectual interests can be appreciated from his extensive publications, which include *The Surnames and Place-Names of the Isle of Man* (1890), *Folk-Lore of the Isle of Man* (1891), *Manx Carols* (1891), *The Diocese of Sodor and Man* (1893), *Manx Ballads and Music* (1896), *Manx Worthies* (1901), *Bishop Hildesley’s Letters* (1904), *Douglas 100 Years Ago* (1904), and *Extracts from the Records of the Isle of Man* (1905). (Harrison, A. M. ‘Arthur William Moore’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. Oxford: OUP, 2004). For Maddrell (2002: 220), Moore is ‘an onlooker, a collator, rather than an active fieldworker ... by no means an integrated member of the community he was studying.’

⁵³One of the speakers at the 22 March inaugural meeting, William Quayle, drew attention to an already incipient revival independent of the society: ‘I am delighted to find that within the past few months considerable efforts have been made in many districts throughout the Island with a view to the revival of the language, and that several classes have been formed. Amongst others, I may mention the following:- Douglas, with 25 students; Lonan, 25 students; Peel, 75 students; and Andreas, 20 students. Classes are also about to be formed in Foxdale and Rushen, and other places. I am told that several gentlemen in these localities have been patriotic enough to offer their services gratuitously as teachers.’ (‘The Origin of the Manx Language Society’ Reprinted from the *Isle of Man Examiner* of 3 January, 1914. <http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/publshrs/yncg.htm>), accessed 12 July, 2015.

⁵⁴For a comprehensive overview of *Manin* and its editor, Sophia Morrison, see Maddrell (2002), who lists the subject areas or disciplines covered in the journal by order of frequency:

lore runs concomitant with, and is latterly generative of, an interest in the Manx language. As manifestations of the native production they were infused with the cultural nationalism of the period. The Revival was a corrective to genteel, romanticized popularizations as exemplified by W. H. Gill's *Manx National Songs, with English Words* (1896), which appealed to audiences who would prefer their Island's songs not to be 'in a language most Manx were desperate to pretend did not exist' (Stowell 2005: 399).⁵⁵

An attempt was also made to introduce language instruction in schools. Education in Man was subject to a modified version of the English Elementary Education Act of 1870, which had made no provision for the language. Repeated petitions to the Whitehall authorities resulted in the decision whether or not to teach the language being allowed to devolve upon individual schools, only one of which opted to implement (and then only for a brief period it transpires) weekly half-hour lessons. Not until 1992 was the language to be reintroduced into the island's school curriculum.

The foremost non-professional scholar in the language during this early period, a sweet-manufacturer by profession and founder member of the society, was John Joseph Kneen (1873-1938). Kneen was a formidable autodidact and *heimatforscher* who also ran special evening classes for YCG members.⁵⁶ His own writings in Manx, with interlinear literal translations in

-
1. Music, folklore/oral history
 2. History, politics/ the war, poems and prose in standard english
 3. "Manx Worthies"
 4. Natural history
 5. Pieces about Manx Gaelic
 6. Poems and pros and prose in Anglo-Manx
 7. Pieces in Manx Gaelic

From the discreet positions occupied by Manx Gaelic, it can be inferred that it is not the principal focus of the journal's enquiry.

⁵⁵ For a balanced and detailed account of late nineteenth century song-collecting, see Belchem (2000: 387-392).

⁵⁶ Something of the patriotic fervour of Kneen and his contemporaries comes across in 'The old Kelts had a motto, "No Language, No Nation"... Nationality can only be completely preserved through the medium of our native language. [...] Let the Language die and our Nationality goes with it. We become merely West Britons.'

English, appeared in the *Isle of Man Examiner* as early as 1895. These were followed by publication of language lessons, a *Manx-English Pronouncing Dictionary*, and *A Grammar of the Manx Language*, compiled in 1910 but not printed until 1931.⁵⁷ This remains one of the most important primers for the language and superseded fellow YCG member Edmund Goodwin's *Chengey Mayrey Ellan Vannin* (1910, reprinted in 1947 as *First Lessons in Manx*). In the preface, Kneen was moved to note a slackening of commitment in the movement, commenting that 'Celtic enthusiasm, always of a fugitive nature, sadly waned again during the last twenty years' (Kneen 1931: 20). This may not be unconnected with the upheavals of the First World War, in which 5 percent of the island's male population were killed.

6.3. Recording the language

Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh first recorded native speakers of Manx with an Edison phonograph in 1905 (McArdle 2006). Other recordings were made on wax cylinders by Dr Rudolph Trebitsch of the *Osterreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften* in Vienna in 1909, and not long after by W.H. Gill. Sophia Morrison's recordings have unfortunately not survived (Maddrell 2002: 224). Carl Marstrander, who visited Man in late 1920s and early 30s, made extensive recordings of native Manx speakers. On his first visit he could only find forty people who spoke Manx to any extent and believed there to be only a single native speaker left by 1934, although the 1931 census had listed 529. In 1946 Charles W. Loch visited the Island and was able to identify twenty people he assessed as native speakers (Stowell 2005: 401).

(YCG Yearly Report, 1913, appendix to *Mannin*, no. 1 (May 1913): 6). The equation of language and nationhood is a commonplace in Celtic revivalism (cf. *Hep brezhoneg, breizh ebet*, 'Without Breton there is no Brittany').

⁵⁷ The full range of his scholarly production may be found in the bibliography appended to 'Brief Biography of John Joseph Kneen' <http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/people/antiqarn/jjkneen.htm>. In 1933, on the recommendation of the Norwegian Celticist Carl Marstrander, with whose assistance he wrote his Grammar, Kneen received a knighthood from King Haakon of Norway.

In 1947, Éamon de Valera, the Irish *Taoiseach* [Prime Minister], visited the Isle of Man as part of a tour of Gaelic-speaking nations. In Cregneash, on the southern tip of the island, he met Ned Maddrell, then working as a caretaker, who readily conversed with him in Manx. De Valera replied in Irish and it is thought they were able more or less to understand each other, each in his own Goidelic language. De Valera was interested to discover that Manx was still spoken, albeit by fewer and fewer people, and the following year he had a team sent from the Irish Folk Commission to record the last native speakers. That team, led by Kevin Danaher, made some five hours of recordings of Manx being spoken and sung by fifteen people. These were elderly people who rarely had opportunities to speak Manx and who had some difficulty recalling it. Fifty years later the recordings were re-mastered and digitized, and a book compiled containing the transcriptions and translations, as well as information about the collectors and their informants. *Skeelalyn Vannin / Stories of Mann*, together with CDs of the recordings themselves, was published in 2003.

6.4. Reawakening

The post-war period heralded a new phase of revivalist zeal. In the 1950s Douglas Fargher made a significant contribution to the revival efforts by arranging Manx language classes for adults, publishing Manx courses, and other material, and striving to promote the language, in spite of widespread disdain or indifference towards such activity at the time.⁵⁸ Sound recordings

⁵⁸To the extent that revival movements often depend on the dedication and initiative of charismatic individuals, a prosopographical approach is called for. Fargher (1926-1987), whose maternal grandfather was a native speaker, became a founder member of the nationalist, republican group *Mec Vannin*, which campaigns for a fully independent Isle of Man. As lexicographer, he is responsible for *Fargher's English–Manx Dictionary* (1979). Brought up to date with the neologisms coined in modern times, the dictionary was the ‘largest work in or about Manx Gaelic since the publication of the Manx Bible in 1772’. Two years before his death, Fargher forcefully upheld the ‘apostolic succession’ that had underpinned the Revival: ‘without the living reality of the spoken language, which was passed on by them to my generation, which we in turn have handed on, we might as well have “took our Manx books and hoove them onto the back of the fire”’ (Quilliam, L. ‘Douglas

were made of the last dozen or so native speakers (see Broderick 1984), so bolstering the corpus of preserved speech. A group of enthusiasts learnt their Manx directly from these last speakers and so became torch-bearers of the language in an alleged unbroken tradition. Until 1957 a Manx-only magazine entitled *Caraa Ghailckagh* [Manx Language Voice] was published by John Gell for *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh*. Between 1965 and 1970 Brian Stowell produced a newsletter in Manx called *Credjue* [Belief], and in the 1970s articles in Manx were published in 'The Manxman', a periodical produced by Ian Faulds and folklorist Mona Douglas (Stowell 2005: 402).

Buntús Cainte, essentially a Manx adaptation of a well-known Irish language course, was produced by Brian Stowell with the assistance of Robert Thomson in the 1960s, and has been used in many classes for adults. In 1973 the Latin 'Chronicle of the Kings of Mann and the Isles' dating predominantly from 1257 was published simultaneously in English and Manx versions. A collection of original stories in Manx, *Skeelaght* [Story telling] was published in 1976 by *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh* (Stowell 2005: 403).

In 1972 *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh*, having been virtually dormant for decades, was reinvigorated when Douglas Fargher and a number of other energetic Manx language activists joined and started publishing new material and organizing Manx Language Nights (*Oieghyn Gaelgagh*) in pubs. In 1976 Mona Douglas revived *Yn Chruinnaght*, which had been a small one-day event in the 1930s and became a much larger, week-long festival of music, dancing and language featuring performers from the Isle of Man and other Celtic countries (Stowell 2005: 402).

In the expression of literary critic and Manxman, Sir Frank Kermode, the Manx are prone to feeling 'mild alienation' and 'qualified foreignness' vis-à-vis the British State. The social and cultural turmoil which affected the Isle of Man during much of the 1970s and 1980s, and the nationalist direct action and electoral success that resulted from it, undoubtedly benefited the

Crebbin Fargher' Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. Oxford: OUP, 2004; accessed 2 July 2010).

movement, as widespread misgivings over the perceived decline in traditional life and loss of Manx identity channelled themselves into a nostalgic language loyalty. In 1985 the Manx language received limited recognition from the Isle of Man government, which led to the setting up of *Coonceil ny Gaelgey* [The Manx Gaelic Advisory Council]. This group is responsible for Manx translations of summaries of new laws which are read out on Tynwald Day each year, as well as translations of the names of government departments, streets and similar terms. The Council, which meets four times a year, also supplies Manx neologisms as necessary to meet the demands made of it.

Another group entitled *Caarjyn ny Gaelgey* [Friends of the Manx Language] was set up in 1991 by MHK [Member of the House of Keys] Peter Karran, with the aim of promoting and supporting the acquisition and use of Manx. This group organizes informal Manx evening classes and residential weekend courses for adults, holds coffee mornings for Manx speakers once a month, and is involved with a number of literary competitions.⁵⁹

Nineteen eighty-three saw the first film in Manx, *Ny Kirree fo Niaghtey* [The Sheep under the Snow], of twenty minutes duration, produced by George Broderick and Peter Maggs, and there have been a small number of films made since despite limited funding for such an enterprise (Stowell 2005).

Short broadcasts in Manx on Manx Radio began in the late 1960s, increasing from 15 minutes per week to an hour by 1978. The presence of Manx at all on the radio was largely due to the efforts of the Gaelic Broadcasting Committee (Gawne 2004).

6.5. The vitality of Manx as a spoken language

During the early years of the Manx revival the majority of the island's population were less than enthusiastic about preserving, let alone reviving, the language as an everyday vernacular. As a result, many of those studying it claimed they simply wanted to read the Bible in Manx, in order to allay any

⁵⁹ www.connect2charity.im/#!/caarjyn-ny-gaelgey/c1py9; accessed 5 June, 2015.

suspensions that they were actually intent on resuscitation. Those who sought to speak Manx fluently were regarded as dangerously eccentric. However, in the late 1930s and early 1940s a small group of enthusiasts emerged who used Manx as a medium of communication and deliberately spent time conversing with and recording native speakers (Stowell 2005: 402). In the 1950s, Leslie Quirk, whose grandmother had been a native Manx speaker and who acquired a near-native competence in the language himself, taught Manx at Douglas High School. A number of the pupils had spontaneously asked for Manx lessons, but after initial enthusiasm, attendance dwindled, so much so that when Brian Stowell took up Manx lessons in 1953, he found himself the only pupil. Much of his free time in the early 1950s was spent driving around the island with fellow enthusiasts conversing entirely in Manx. Interest in the language increased during the 1960s and evening classes were taught by those who had acquired the language from native speakers, which conferred a certain legitimacy and cachet on the undertaking. By 1971 the census showed 284 speakers (0.52 percent), up from 165 people (0.34 percent) in 1961 but the outlook still seemed bleak, and when the last traditional native speaker, Ned Maddrell died in 1974, Manx was declared extinct. Perhaps because it was already judged an irrelevance no Manx question was included in the 1981 census. This was a critical juncture for the language, but the 1991 census bore witness to the effectiveness of adult education: 741 people, 35 percent aged between 25 and 44, were recorded as being able to speak, read or write Manx, around 1 percent of the population (Thomson 1984: 68).

A 2001 Mori poll showed that 25 percent of the island's population were now keen to learn Manx.⁶⁰ The census returns of that year show an increase of Manx speakers from 741 (1991) to 1,689. The questions asked and their corresponding answers in the 2001 and 2011 census returns are shown below:

⁶⁰Minority Rights Group International, *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - United Kingdom : Manx*, 2008: www.refworld.org/docid/49749c8f5.html; accessed 4 June, 2015.

	2001	2011	Percentage increase
<i>Do you speak, read or write Manx Gaelic?</i>	1,689	1,823	7.93
<i>Do you speak Manx Gaelic?</i>	1,527	1,662	7.93
<i>Do you write Manx Gaelic?</i>	706	796	12.75
<i>Do you read Manx Gaelic?</i>	910	1,079	18.57

As a percentage of the population, the 2011 speakers are at almost the same level as in 2001 (2.14 percent) but they do offer the promise of a consolidated revival, yet for linguists, or at any rate those linguists that are not also activists, such data are in many ways unhelpful.

Although censuses collect demographic data such as age, place of birth, residence, gender and occupation, the published reports often do not correlate all of these with languages. The Isle of Man census report correlates Manx speaker numbers with administrative divisions. Moreover, like all self-reporting data, and especially in the case of revived languages, in which all respondents without exception are *learners* of the language, census figures need to be treated with caution. There is no indication of the quantity, quality, or fluency of the Manx spoken, written, or read. As formulated above, the questions constitute a very blunt instrument for measuring vitality, since a positive response may indicate linguistic competency ranging from CEFR levels A1 to C2. As mentioned above, Ager (2009) reports that Carl Marstrander could find only forty people who spoke Manx to some extent in the late 1920s, and that in 1934 he believed that only one native speaker remained, even though the 1931 census had returned 529. Those with only a smattering of Manx are the census equivalents of ‘false positives’. Clague (2009) reports an informal evaluation carried out in 2003 by Tadhg Ó hÍfearnáin of the University of Limerick, who, on the basis of peer group assessment, that is, highly competent Manx speakers’ assessments of their own and each other’s levels of fluency considered the number of highly competent Manx speakers was likely to number around fifty. Ager (2009: 44)

estimates that the current number of fluent Manx speakers ranges from fifty to five hundred and that the difference between these estimates are based on different definitions of fluency. The lower estimate is the number of people who are ‘very fluent’ in Manx, while the higher estimate is the number who are able to conduct a conversation in the language.

In any case, it is doubtful whether vitality can be measured purely numerically. Since perhaps the majority of the respondents are children learning the language at school, it remains to be seen how many of these children, even those in the Manx-medium schools, will choose or have the opportunity to keep their Manx active in adult life. Attendance at Manx-medium schools is no guarantee of future language activism or commitment.

6.6. Official status of Manx

Every July summaries of legislation passed by the Tynwald during the previous twelve months are read aloud in English and Manx in an open-air ceremony on Tynwald Hill. This practice, which has lasted for centuries, serves to remind Manx citizens of the symbolic importance of the language while also providing it with a degree of prestige in a domain it had vacated in its early history and equipping it with an expanding vocabulary and terminology (Stowell 2005: 112).⁶¹

The Isle of Man Act of 1958 was the harbinger of significant constitutional reform. The 1950s and early sixties had been a period of high unemployment

⁶¹ At present, Members of the Tynwald are permitted to use relevant customary words and phrases in Manx Gaelic, provided that the meaning of those words or phrases is either well understood or the Member provides a translation into English if requested to so do by the presiding officer. According to the ECRML, 4th State Monitoring Report UK15-01-2014, ‘A significant number of the Members of Tynwald do now use such words and phrases in Manx Gaelic during parliamentary proceedings.’

www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/Report/EvaluationReports/UKECRML4_en.pdf; accessed 26 May, 2014

in Man, so the Manx Government resolved to use its newly acquired powers to allow the tax system to attract businesses and new residents to the island. A considerable influx of immigrants from the mainland stirred resentment among islanders when some incomers continued to relate primarily to their British origins rather than to the Island. The burgeoning finance industry too, had a deleterious impact on the indigenous population, who found property prices beyond their means. 'New resident policies' led to considerable social and cultural upheaval as the population leapt 13 percent in the sixties and 21 percent in the seventies. This subjected to strain the close-knit traditional Manx communities and led to the rapid growth of nationalist militancy. By the end of the 1970s *Mec Vannin* (the Manx Nationalist Party) came very close to winning a number of seats in the House of Keys.⁶² The native Manx population was striving for a new sense of their own identity and purpose. According to Gawne (2002: 2),

Urged on by the common perception that Government and new residents alike were treating the Manx as second-class citizens, a number of Manx people and some incomers looked to the Manx language and its associated culture to re-establish a strong Manx identity.

With moderate nationalism now garnering support, the Manx government, whether acting out of expediency or conviction, modulated its official stance towards the Manx language from one of denigration and indifference to active promotion. This is not to say, however, that the language automatically attracted allegiance from the political class. In 1981 a survey by *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh* found that more than half of the candidates standing for election to the Tynwald opposed any official support for Manx, thus confirming *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh*'s view that there was considerable ignorance of the Manx language on the part of the government, which was

⁶²The unpopularity of the Manx government's policies and the social tensions they generated is graphically illustrated by the conviction and imprisonment for arson of three men in the 1980s, after partly built houses, unaffordable to locals, were razed. The action attracted a large measure of popular support (Clague 2009: 173).

seen as an unlikely source of support for the language. Yet even if support extended no further than financial assistance for evening classes for adults, there was a sense in which Manx was now seen as politically correct and socially desirable. The Island's involvement in multinational finance and the weakening of the Anglo-Manx dialect made Manx symbolically available for promotion as a marker of a distinct island identity.

In 1984 Charles Cain, MHK for Ramsey, put forward a motion in the Tynwald proposing:

1. That Manx Gaelic should be supported and encouraged by all agencies of Government and Boards of Tynwald so far as they are practically able.
2. That all official oaths and declarations should be able to be made in Manx Gaelic or English at the option of the person making any such oath or declaration.
3. That all documents expressed in Manx Gaelic shall have equal official and legal standing as documents expressed in English.
4. That where places, roads or streets are bilingually named in English and Manx Gaelic, the use of the Manx name should have the same official and legal standing as the use of the English name.

The motion was referred to a select committee, who were generally supportive, as long as the promotion of Manx did not impede the economic development of the island.⁶³ Greater support was promised for the provision of Manx language classes, and the teaching of Manx history and culture in

⁶³Only one member spoke against the motion but was perhaps more generally representative of those disinclined to conflate language and patriotism: '[...] I do not believe that there is any pressure from within the Island for this and I am not going to be branded less of a patriot to the Isle of Man as a Manxman because I do not happen to speak Manx Gaelic or, even more important, understand it. That may be wicked of me, it may be disloyal in some eyes; I do not particularly believe it is' (Gawne 2002:2).

schools, but compulsory study of the language was thought inadvisable, given the resistance any such move would be likely to encounter.⁶⁴

In April 2003 the United Kingdom Government ratified (on behalf of the Isle of Man Government) the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, thus agreeing to the Charter at Part II protection level to the Isle of Man. Part III is more specific in its requirements:

Part III lays down detailed rules in a number of fields, some of which develop the basic principles affirmed in Part II. States undertake to apply those provisions of Part III to which they have subscribed. Firstly they have to specify the languages to which they agree to this part being applied, and then they have to select at least thirty-five undertakings in respect of each language. A large number of provisions consist of several options, of varying degrees of stringency, one of which has to be chosen “according to the situation of each language”.⁶⁵

Practically speaking, many of these requirements are already being fulfilled by the government of the Isle of Man, specifically as far as education and heritage are concerned. In addition, the possibility of signing for Part III, and so becoming on a par with Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Welsh, is kept under review. According to the the latest ECRML State Monitoring Report, the language ‘continues to be strongly supported by the Manx government. There are good initiatives supporting, in particular, education and media. Various

⁶⁴ For an extensive discussion of this phase of revaloration of the language, see Richard Prentice (1990) and Miller (1993).

⁶⁵ COE (2008 n.p.):

www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/aboutcharter/default_en.asp accessed 15 February 2014

public activities promote the use of Manx in public, including new social media and the internet.’⁶⁶

6.7.1. Bilingual Signage

Campaigns to enhance the status of minority languages frequently concentrate on increasing their visibility, since including local languages in the public space makes a statement about language vitality. In other words, the visibility of written languages is understood to correlate with the ethnolinguistic vitality of their spoken equivalents. At the very least, it impinges subliminally on the consciousness of the reader and raises awareness of the existence of the minority language and the official recognition accorded it. From the print environment of the Isle of Man, the impression gained of Manx would be one of vibrancy and widespread support, a picture which is markedly out of step with both its *de facto* status and its spoken vitality. Since the late 1980s and increasingly, Manx may be found on street and shop signs, on police, fire service and post office vehicles, on the telephone directory, logos and headings, and newspaper mastheads, as well the labels of produce whose local provenance is highlighted.⁶⁷

Public transport timetables are bilingual and buses occasionally display their destination in Manx only, much to the amusement and frequently derision of the bus travelling public. It is evident that the profile and status of Manx are completely out of proportion to the number of speakers. (Clague 2009: 174)

⁶⁶ ECRML, 4th State Monitoring Report UK15-01-2014 www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/Report/EvaluationReports/UKECRML4_en.pdf; accessed 3 April, 2015.

⁶⁷ When old signs need replacing, it is accepted policy for their replacements to be bilingual (Sallabank 2013:163)

The Manx lettering enjoys varying degrees of salience, from equality in terms of position and size of font, to the subordinate but symbolically significant, to the merely decorative and near-illegible. Sebba (2010), author of a semiotic case-study Manx signage, sees the language as largely relegated to symbolic and ceremonial displays, intended to create an aestheticized and ‘exotic’ *linguascape* for tourists, particularly in the use of an historically inappropriate Celtic font.

Whether or not this is merely an astute exercise in corporate branding, such tokenism, if that is what it is, is arguably an important element in language promotion and demonstrates ‘the ability of “linguistic landscape” to influence perceptions of linguistic vitality, if not language practices’ (Sallabank 2013: 163). It may be that *any* measures that serve to raise awareness of a language are a necessary precursor to increasing use among the population. However, in isolation from some overall strategy, it is vulnerable to the accusation of ‘window-dressing’ and may also be the object of a backlash on the part of those who would censure unjustified and exorbitant expenditure.⁶⁸

As Ellis and mac a’ Ghobhainn (1971: 144) observed:

A language cannot be saved by singing a few songs or having a word printed on a postage stamp. It cannot even be saved by getting ‘official status’ for it, or by getting it taught in schools. It is saved by its use (no matter how imperfect) by its introduction and use in every walk of life and at every conceivable opportunity until it becomes a natural thing, no longer laboured or false. It means in short a period of struggle and hardship. There is no easy route to the restoration of language.

⁶⁸The SNP Government’s implementation of a bilingual Gaelic road-sign policy, even in areas that not traditionally Gaelic-speaking, and at a cost of £26m has been widely criticized, e.g. ‘Why does Gaelic make people so angry?’, BBC News, 8 September 2015: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-34126203>; accessed 9 September 2015 .

It is by no means clear as yet whether making Manx more visible in the public space has made it more audible.

6.7.2. Commercial exploitation of Manx

Since a number of Manx companies have started using signage and other material in Manx to advertize their Manx credentials and appeal to local customers, non-Manx businesses with branches in the Isle of Man have followed suit, most prominently the supermarket chain Tesco. Recent arrivals on the island intuitively understand the benefits of using Manx in this token fashion. Limited Manx announcements are made on Manx Airlines flights, and on Steam Packet Company ferries, and banks registered on the island are obliged by law to honour cheques written in Manx, much as Scottish banks are obliged to when the language is Gaelic (Stowell 2005: 414). In this way, the language serves as a visible marker of a distinct and marketable non-mainland identity. Such usage, however, is not necessarily symptomatic of any revitalisation of Manx as a medium of communication.

The Isle of Man ‘Positive National Identity Guide’ [*Oayllys Jarroo-enney Ashoonagh Jarroooagh*], ‘for island residents who want to communicate the Island’s advantage to the outside world’ includes the recommendation: ‘Incorporating some Manx phrases in your communications and customer service greetings is an interesting point of difference’.⁶⁹ Similarly, according to the Manx Heritage Foundation’s ‘A Guide to the Business Use of Manx’

⁶⁹<https://www.gov.im/media/622823/positiveidentity.pdf>. Some useful phrases are offered (p.15) ‘to get you started’: *Moghreymie* (MORR-aMY) Good morning; *Fastyr mie* (FASS-ter MY) Good afternoon; *Oievie* (ee-vy) Good night; *My sailt* (ma-SYLCH) Please; *Gura mie ayd* (gurr-a-MY-edd): Thank you >Faiit (fyit) Welcome; *Kys t’ou?* (kiss-TOW) How are you?; *Braew* (brow) Fine .

[*Gaelg son dellal*] with CD containing resources to help businesses incorporate the language into their everyday operations, declares *inter alia*.⁷⁰

- use of Manx can add value to a brand by emphasising its local nature
- it helps distinguish the Isle of Man from the UK when used in meetings and conferences
- visual use of the language can impact on customer perception
- it costs nothing, but harnesses goodwill

The commercial use of Manx is arguably a two-edged sword, a genuine endorsement of the language for some, cynical exploitation and tokenism for others. At any rate, the new-found market appeal of cosmetic Manx is in notable contrast to the stigma attached to the language up prior to the 1970s.

6. 7. 3. Media

Manx Radio, partly funded by the government, provides two weekly programmes in Manx Gaelic and three other weekly programmes that are partly in Manx Gaelic and partly in English. In addition, selected Manx Radio news items are translated into Manx once a week and are made available as text and as sound files on the Manx Radio website.⁷¹ Internet TV (MMTV) video reports frequently deals with topics relating to the language.⁷² There are now several dozens of YouTube videos available online.⁷³

According to Crystal (2000: 141), a minority language will flourish if its speakers can deploy electronic technology. There are indications that the appropriation of new technologies has been a significant stimulus to Manx

⁷⁰Isle of Man Today, November 23, 2007:
<http://www.iomtoday.co.im/news/business/manx-language-has-role-to-play-in-island-s-corporate-identity-1-1767759>; accessed 4 April, 2015.

⁷¹<www.manxradio.com>; accessed 4 April, 2015.

⁷²www.manx.net/tv; accessed 4 April, 2015.

⁷³<<https://www.youtube.com/user/gaelg/videos>>; accessed 4 April, 2015.

revitalization in recent years. The language has a increasing presence on the World Wide Web. In 2013, a children's language app was created by the Manx Heritage Foundation (MHF) followed by the first children's television series translated into Manx. Thousands of people have also downloaded a free language learning app for smartphones and tablets.⁷⁴ Not the least of the positive effects of embracing media technology is the emancipation it offers from the stereotypical images with which a remote heritage culture is often shackled. Motivation is a key factor in all approaches to language planning for endangered languages. One Isle of Man politician and language activist advised: 'you've got to make it fashionable, you've got to get it away from being seen as a plonker ... and the way you do that is you try and set it up and make it sexy' (quoted in Stallabank 2013: 206). As Slimane remarks in relation to Welsh, 'media provision serves to represent the sophistication of the Welsh community and how far it can cope with the contemporary world rather than being simply part of an old-fashioned heritage. It is also considered a new mode of representation in the post-industrial society' (2009: 209). For children and adolescents in particular, who are unacquainted with the last speakers and for whom the traditional Gaelic culture is now bewilderingly remote, technology is an ideal means to dispel 'the death-laden aura of permanent mourning for its [Manx's] demise as the main community language in the Isle of Man' (Stowell 2005: 416).

Language-learning resources are becoming increasingly available on-line.⁷⁵ In an ongoing project funded by the Manx Heritage Foundation, which has an integrated social media presence website, YouTube channel, and twitter feed, since 2005, a cardinal text, the Manx bible, has been available in electronic format online, equipped with a searchable database, matching Authorised Version translation and interactive Manx dictionary and grammar.⁷⁶ In

⁷⁴ BBC News story, 1 October 2013 <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-isle-of-man-24356637>; accessed 6 April 2015.

⁷⁵ For example, *Insee Gaelig*: www.learnmanx.com; and sch.im Manx page (Isle of Man Department of Education & Children and Culture Vannin:

<https://www2.sch.im/groups/manxlanguage/wiki/e1ced/Faillt_Welcome.html>;

⁷⁶ <<http://mannin.info/MHF/>>

conjunction with *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh*, the Heritage Foundation produces material in Manx for both adult and young readers and, runs a Manx Language week in the autumn which includes lectures and social events in the language. It also has a programme of digitization of archives, records and other resources. As mentioned above, the *Coonceil ny Gaelgey*, which operates as a sub-committee of the Manx Heritage Foundation, provides authoritative Manx versions of the titles of Government Departments, street names etc. and collaborates in the creation of new Manx words and phrases.⁷⁷

Minority language media in general permit speakers or learners who may live in areas remote from language-learning centres to maximize their connections with the linguistic community. This applies not only to within the Isle of Man itself but extends to the Manx diaspora and allows interest in the language to be kindled among Manx descendants world-wide, so widening the demographic base of potential support for the revival.⁷⁸

6.8. Manx in the education system

Provision of Manx language classes in schools in the 1950s was strictly limited. Leslie Quirk began teaching Manx at Douglas High School in 1953, and in the 1970s the head teacher of Arbory Primary School in Ballabeg was inspired to learn Manx by the nationalist movement and set up Manx lessons in his school (Gawne, 2009).

⁷⁷For an overview of the formation of neologisms to meet modern needs in Manx, see Broderick 2012: 140- 161.

⁷⁸ The London Manx Society (1895), The Queensland Manx Society (1914), The North American Manx Association (1928) and others testify to the interest of emigrants and their descendants in maintaining links with the island.

In 1990 a quality of life survey commissioned by the Manx government found that 36 percent of those surveyed (including many new residents to the island) supported the teaching of Manx language in schools as an *optional* subject. This led to the establishment in January 1992 of the position of Manx Language Officer (*Oaseir Gailckagh*), to be assisted by peripatetic teachers, who together constituted the Manx Language Unit. Dr. Brian Stowell was appointed as the first incumbent on 2 January, 1992 (Broderick 2012). The Unit was entrusted with supervising all aspects of Manx language teaching and accreditation in schools. This comprised curriculum development, research, teacher training, liason with other Manx language organizations, translation and a number of other responsibilities. With only three members the Unit was limited in its scope but nevertheless succeeded in establishing useful contacts with education ministers and others involved in language revival and revitalization efforts in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Ireland and Jersey.

The initial plan was for Manx to be taught in a similar way to music, which involved taking pupils out of their normal classes and teaching them in small groups. The Manx Language Unit aimed to provide thirty minutes of Manx, sufficient to provide a basic introduction to the language without disrupting schools' normal curriculum. The decision was taken not to offer Manx lessons to under-sevens as teachers were concerned about the effects of removing children from other classes (Stowell 2000).

A poll of parents and children in May 1992 revealed a degree of discontent with the way Manx was being taught. Almost twenty percent of pupils (1,949) at primary and secondary level expressed a desire to learn Manx, the percentage among primary pupils in particular being reaching almost forty (1,482). However, resources were insufficient to teach them all, and when Manx classes began in September of that year, a total of 1,423 pupils were able to learn Manx for only thirty minutes a week, the majority in primary schools. Those opposing the reintroduction of Manx in schools had not anticipated such a response. Take-up numbers currently average around 750-

800 primary schoolchildren, out of a total of approximately 6,600 (Clague 2009).

At first the teaching of Manx in schools involved large classes of up to forty or fifty pupils. Although the position of Manx Language Officer (MLO) was initially intended to be a non-teaching post, the demand for Manx lessons resulted in the MLO teaching as well. The Unit had initially agreed that they would try to teach 1,000 pupils per year and had assumed that more teachers would be recruited but as no new teachers were appointed, the numbers studying Manx had to be reduced to about 800. While there has been little overt opposition to the teaching of Manx in schools, many teachers have been concerned about subjecting an already crowded curriculum to further pressure. Moreover, the introduction of Manx came not long after the establishment of compulsory French in primary schools, and the introduction of the English National Curriculum (Stowell 2000). Manx was seen by many as a luxury that schools could ill afford.

The Manx lessons place an emphasis on the spoken language and are intended to foster positive attitudes to Manx culture and language-learning in general. While primary school pupils tend to be enthusiastic, (Stowell, reported by Ager 2009: 31) testifies waning commitment among secondary-school pupils. Manx lessons are not compulsory, and the children can opt out if they wish. Parents who have moved to the Isle of Man tend to see knowledge of Manx language as a means of integrating into the local culture, or at least attenuating their sense of intrusion, and are, in many instances, more supportive of the language than parents of Manx origin.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ This pattern of greater support from outwith the community involved can be observed in a wide range of language revival movements, the Cornish among them. In an island where 53 percent of the population were born abroad, it may seem surprising that there is as much enthusiasm among British and overseas immigrants for the Manx language as there is among

In a statement issued in 2012 by the Department of Education it was declared that

Over the past two academic years, the Department of education has supported the training of nine teachers by *Yn Unnid Gaelgach*. These teachers have become Manx specialists in their own schools, thereby making the language a much more important feature of school life. It is hoped that this scheme may be extended in to other schools in the future.

Manx is available as a subject up to A level in some secondary schools, where since 1997 the *Teisht Chadjin Ghaelgah* (TCG: a qualification equivalent to the GCSE) is offered. It can be studied instead of another modern language, and this involves two fifty-minute lessons per week. In other schools the amount of time available for Manx is more limited as there are problems fitting Manx classes into an already crowded curriculum. The number of pupils studying Manx at secondary school tends to decrease significantly as many of those who had studied it at primary school make new friends at secondary school who have no knowledge of or interest in the language. Many pupils conclude that they have no further need of the language; only those who are very enthusiastic and committed continue to study it (Derbyshire after Ager 2009: 31).

The *Ard-Teisht Ghalgagh* is an Advanced Certificate in Manx developed according to the specifications of the modern language A-level. In 2010 examinations for the Advanced/Special Course were held. In an effort to improve standards, new examinations are currently being prepared in

native Manx people, but identities can (in both senses) be forged by such efforts. There is on the one hand a threatened identity to be protected; on the other, the language may be an aspect of Manx life to be embraced by incomers as a part of their own and their children's emerging identities. See 'Manx: Bringing a language back from the dead', 31 January, 2013: <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-21242667>, Accessed 23 August 2015.

accordance with specifications adhered to by the Northern Irish Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA).

As far as tertiary education is concerned, undergraduate courses in Celtic Studies and Celtic languages are offered at a number of universities in the UK, Ireland and elsewhere. There is no provision, however, for study through the medium of Manx at this level. Manx comprises a minor element of undergraduate degree courses at the Universities of Edinburgh and Mannheim.

The Centre for Manx Studies (*Laare-Studeyrys Manninagh*) was set up in Douglas in the Isle of Man in 1992 as part of the University of Liverpool's School of Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology.⁸⁰ In addition to postgraduate research degrees, the Centre offers a full-time and a part-time Master's degree in Manx Studies and a full-time Diploma in Manx Studies (The University of Liverpool, 2014). The focus of the centre varies according to the research interests of its directors, who to date have been archaeologists and medievalists. There are also researchers working on lexicography, music, and a range of other topics, but few on the Manx language (Breesha Madrell, reported by Ager 2009: 32).

6. 8 .1. The Scope of Manx-medium education

In the early 1990s a group of families who had decided to bring up their children in Manx and English came together to set up *Chied Chesmad* [First Step], a Manx medium playgroup with ten children initially which survived for a number of years (Stowell 2005: 408). It was succeeded by *Mooinjer Veggey*, a Manx-medium playgroups association, which as a small group of parents with young children. Beginning as a parents and toddlers group that met informally in members' homes and spoke Manx together, the group came

⁸⁰ Due to move to the Liverpool Campus in the autumn of 2015.

to the conclusion that in order to be fully viable it needed to attract greater numbers, and that official recognition would not be granted unless someone with childcare qualifications assumed responsibility. This group, which started with just six children, was always run through Manx, until one member left to teach at the *Bunscoill* [Manx medium primary school]. Since then the association has taken over a number of other playgroups, in which the amount of Manx used depends on the language competence of its leaders.

In November 1999, a group called *Sheshaght ny Paarantyn* [Parents for Manx-medium Education] was established by parents with children at the *Mooinder Veggey* with the aim of exerting pressure on the Manx government to support Manx-medium education at primary level. The Department of Education eventually agreed to do so, and in September 2001 a Manx-medium unit was set up in Ballacottier School. Initially nine children between the ages of four and five attended. The unit was successful and enjoyed strong support from parents. When the unit first started those involved could not predict the reaction of the children to being immersed in Manx. However this did not appear to be an issue, and one child remarked that the languages they used were different but it didn't matter which. Since then the Manx-medium unit has expanded and taken over a school in St. John's, in the west of the Island, which is now known as the *Bunscoill Ghaelgagh* and currently has fifty-five pupils. Most of the children arrive at the school with no Manx; a few come from Manx-speaking families; and some have acquired rudimentary Manx in *Mooinder Veggey*.

At secondary level the provision of Manx-medium education is more limited. A number of subjects are taught through Manx at Queen Elizabeth High School (QEII) at Peel during the first three years. In the 2008/2009 academic year those subjects were geography, history and information technology. Pupils are allowed to choose two subjects through Manx.

Manx-medium education at primary and secondary level is hampered by a shortage of teachers able to teach in the language, and a lack of textbooks and other materials. Some textbooks have been translated by teachers and others,

and some material in English is used for discussion purposes in Manx. A small number of families have been prepared to bring up their children at least partially in Manx. This is a symbolically significant development in view of the high level of opposition to the use of Manx as a vernacular language rather than as a subject of academic or antiquarian study (Stowell 2005: 415). In some cases both parents speak Manx, in others only one, and in at least one family there are three generations of Manx speakers, although significantly they rarely speak Manx at home. Not all the children brought up in such families have become regular Manx speakers, though most can use it if required. The children who have been educated through Manx are more likely to use the language regularly, while those who attended English-medium schools have, in some cases, turned against the language.

As mentioned above, the 2001 Manx census returns showed an increase of Manx speakers from 643 (1991) to 1,689. The questions asked and their corresponding answers were as follows:

Do you speak, read or write Manx Gaelic? 1,689

Do you speak Manx Gaelic? 1,527

Do you write Manx Gaelic? 706

Do you read Manx Gaelic? 910

A breakdown according to the age groups of speakers would allow us to infer that the increase is directly attributable to the teaching Manx in schools.

Table 2. Manx Speakers by Age: Comparison of Numbers 1991-2001

Age Group	Numbers in 1991	Numbers in 2001
0-4 years	13	41
5-9 years	23	217
10-14 years	64	340
15-19 years	47	146
20-24 years	41	64

25-29 years	64	79
30-34 years	60	64
35-39 years	62	80
40-44 years	74	90
45-49 years	41	70
50-54 years	45	71
55-59 years	38	61
60-64 years	39	50
65-69 years	32	45
70-74 years	28	31
75-79 years	22	33
80-84 years	16	36
85+ years	22	25

Source: Clague (2009:177)

As can be seen in Table 2 the most dramatic increase in the number of Manx speakers occurs in the age range of 5-19 years, particularly in the 10-14 band, in which 64 has risen to 340 in a decade. However, in the absence of reliable information on fluency and competence, these figures must be viewed with caution.

In summary, according to the fourth periodical report, in 2011/12 there were seventy-eight children attending the *Bunscoill Ghaelgagh* where they receive their education entirely through Manx. On leaving the *Bunscoill*, children have the opportunity to learn two subjects through Manx at the secondary school within whose catchment area the *Bunscoill* lies. Manx is an optional time-tabled subject in the 7-11 year old age group at all primary schools. At four of the five secondary schools, Manx is an optional timetabled subject in the 11-14 year old age group, in the remaining state school Manx may be studied as an extracurricular subject. The language is available as an optional timetabled subject at all secondary schools in the 14-18 year old age group.

Examination-assessed courses, at general and advanced level (GCSE and A-level) in the language are available to all pupils.⁸¹

It is so far unclear whether the present school population will be sufficient to ensure the critical mass of future Manx speakers that the movement will require if it is to progress beyond a plateau of several hundred speakers.

6.9. Attitudes to Manx

When in the 1930s when Douglas Fargher, Leslie Quirk and others started learning Manx from the dwindling remnant of native speakers, they were considered almost perverse. Stowell relates an incident in the 1950s in St Matthew's Church in Douglas during which Douglas Faragher read from the Bible in Manx and an old man shouted 'Stop that! Stop that! That was never a real language! We don't want that nonsense spouted in here! We don't want in here! We don't want in here!' (reported in Ager 2009: 34). At that time Manx was rarely heard in public, except on Tynwald Day. By the 1970s the accusation – 'never a *real* language' had modulated into 'never much of a language.' Even in the 1970s speaking Manx was not tolerated everywhere. For example, one Manx teacher and a number of his friends were asked to leave the apub in Peel and were not allowed to return after some of locals complained about them speaking Manx (Ager 2009: 34). Ironically, this same venue has since become a popular meeting-place for Manx music sessions and conversation.⁸² An ingrained hostility to the Manx language may coexist

⁸¹ ECRML, 4th State Monitoring Report UK15-01-2014 www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/Report/EvaluationReports/UK15-01-2014_en.pdf (with the inclusion of corrections made by the Manx Language Officer (Chapter 4, Appendix II, p. 44)

⁸² Adrian Cain: 'I often go to my local pub The Albert to speak Manx to friends, which is strange to think, given that years ago this could have ended up with me being asked to leave a pub'. Cited in 'How the Manx Language Came back from the Dead', The Guardian Newspaper, 2 April 2015: <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/apr/02/how-manx-language-came-back-from-dead-isle-of-man>; accessed 8 May, 2015.

(paradoxically) with pride in being Manx. Indeed such hostility may be fuelled by resentment at the connotations of indigeneity and authenticity that the knowledge of the language may be seen to confer. Inability to speak the language does not preclude a sense of belonging to the Manx community. Clague (2009: 194) states: 'The Manx language is not a badge of identity for the majority of the Manx people. We are physically separate by virtue of being an island, and are, for the most part, under our own jurisdiction.' Language then need not be a given and indispensable condition; 'islandness', a shared history, and a measure of political independence may be sufficient to establish a group identity. As Dorian (1999: 31) comments, 'Because it is only one of an almost infinite variety of potential identity markers, [a language] is easily replaced by others that are just as effective. In this respect the ancestral language is functionally expendable.' Irish is a salient example of how a strong identity can survive near total language loss. Compulsory Irish at school, as Doyle ruefully observes, 'has proved more of a curse than a blessing' (2015: 265). The majority are content for Irish to serve a symbolic rather than a communicative function.

It would be true to say that attitudes towards Manx are markedly more favourable than they were thirty years ago, if only because the older community members for whom it still held the stigma of poverty and backwardness, have died off. The pejorative force of 'peasant language' is no longer felt. Native vernaculars are growing in prestige and, and are generally now seen as a valuable part of island heritage and as assets in the marketing of localness as a brand.

6.10. Language change

As the era of the native Manx speakers recedes, so their influence on the spoken Manx of the present diminishes and influence from English increases both in pronunciation and in grammar. This is perhaps only to be expected given the large influx into Man of outsiders, mainly from England, in the last thirty years or so. But equally, the native language of the native population *is* English, so typical first-language interference or flawed and partial

acquisition is likely to affect the direction in which neo-Manx develops. Thoughts occur in English and then the Manx is mapped onto them. This may involve obvious *calques* or phenomena such as preposition-pronoun separation (e.g. *lesh mish* ‘with me’ for the correct combined form *lhiams* (cf. Ir. *liomsa*, ScG *leumsa*). As there are no native-speaker sensibilities to offend, interlanguage transferal goes unchecked and learners are left to their own linguistic devices (and devisings).

Written neo-Manx is highly variable, in some instances on account of lacunae of attestation. Broderick (2012: 162) gives the example of *dys y Ghiarmaan* or *dys y Yermaan* for ‘going to Germany’, no form for Germany having survived in traditional Manx. The continuous particle *ag*, having been extended analogically in long-established usage to become part of a verbal noun with vocalic anlaut after auxiliary verb *jannoo* ‘do’, may or may not appear in e.g. ‘She would be preparing a script’ – *yinnagh* (would do) *ee* (she) *[g]aarlaghey* ([at]preparing) *script* (a script). Its non-appearance would be technically an archaism were it not for the loss of the temporal discrimination necessary to label it as such. In other cases, formerly semantically distinct members of a lexical field collapse into synonyms (e.g. *fys* and *fyssyree* (formerly ‘prior specialised knowledge’ to mean ‘knowledge’). Popular usage is the arbiter as there is as yet no prescriptive authority to which to appeal. In the context of Irish, Doyle writes:

It is reasonable to assume that the learners who began to speak Irish in the period 1890-1914 must have spoken an interlanguage, and that the grammar of this interlanguage must have been heavily influenced by their native English. Not surprisingly, this led to a sudden and radical change in the kind of Irish being spoken, and also in the kind of Irish that was being written, as the vast majority of writers were learners (2015:235).

Doyle then goes on to discuss by way of example the failure of learners of Irish to master the two verbs *to be*, *is* and *tá*, similar to the *ser* and

estar distinction in Spanish, taken by purists to be a violation of fundamental principles of Irish thought.

Contamination from English in the area of grammar and syntax continued unabated since the Revival began, being an inevitable consequence of the philosophy of the Gaelic League. The only way of ensuring that Irish retained the purity of idiom was to prevent learners from speaking it, rather than encouraging them to do so. But this in turn would have meant abandoning the whole Revival project. (ibid.: 237)

It is common for normal diachronic change to accelerate during language endangerment as the number of interlocutors and contexts of use shrink and the dominant language infiltrates into every communicative function. Broderick (1984, 1991, 1999) gives examples in ‘late Manx’ of phenomena such as destabilisation of vowel phonemes, simplification of consonant phonemes, loss of mutation, gender distinction, and the genitive case, and the permeation of English influence. In other words, the last old native speakers went ‘seriously astray’ (1999: 10), but in a language that had long been deviating from classical norms. To some extent, formal L2 instruction anchored in classical norms has served to correct these tendencies. According to Kewley Draskau (2000: 245-46), there is evidence that, in twenty-first century Manx, both written and spoken, the inflected preterite of regular verbs is used with increasing confidence, in all modes, to express past events. She reports ‘valuable ground regained’ and a readiness to deploy certain neglected inflected verb tenses correctly. This ‘appears to reflect a greater linguistic awareness on the part of language users of the subtleties and available options of Manx syntax; a contributory factor is possibly the conscious acquisition of Manx as L2 with attendant quasi-formality in a majority of cases, but also implies an increased confidence in the language on the part of speakers.

Traditional speakers or those who claim to have acquired their Manx directly from traditional speakers differ in language practices and attitudes from younger, new or ‘neo-speakers’. According to Sallabank (2013: 128) ‘there are incipient signs that some children in Manx-medium primary education are developing their own ‘Bunscoill’ or ‘youth’ variety of Manx, which again meets with varying reactions including denial and disapproval. Are children in the *Bunscoill Ghaelgagh* developing characteristics which differ from the usage of second language adult speakers, and that of the last traditional Manx speakers? Clague (2007) found that in each class, a single child could trigger language change. Among the features found among the older children (aged 6–8) were:

- a discourse marker used as a Manx equivalent of the relatively new English quotative ‘he/she was like’
- a tendency to use periphrastic structures rather than synthetic ones. Clague comments that this usage was also favoured by the last traditional Manx speakers, but is considered inferior by some more purist current adult speakers.

New terminology and usage developed and one teacher was reported to be of the opinion that the system of initial consonant mutations on nouns and adjectives, which is an iconic feature of Celtic languages, might under threat in non-native-speaker Manx.

What is seen as ‘traditional’ Manx and the emergent *Bunscoill* Manx are in tension. One teacher commented:

Quite often the Manx for GCSE and A-level differs considerably from what is being used in the Bunscoill because I suppose we’re trying to stick more to the older Manx really and the Manx in the textbooks whereas they’re using a language which is much more vibrant probably but tends to have a lot of English influence in word order and so on ... it’s inevitable really. The number of homes where the

parents actually speak Manx with the children here is very small, two or three (reported in Sallabank 2013:131).

Revived languages should not of course be thought of as immune to language change. If change is to be in the direction of English, that too is a natural consequence of language contact. Wholesale change of a language's grammar in conformity to the grammar of a dominant contact language has been studied by Ross under the label of "metatypy", with this definition:

Metatypy is a diachronic process whereby the morphosyntactic constructions of one of the languages of a bilingual speech community are restructured on the model of the constructions of the speakers' other language. [...] The constructions of the replica language are changed through metatypy so as to match those of the model language in meaning and morphosyntax (Ross 2007: 116).

Metatypy occurs because it enables a language to be a badge of identity for its speakers without being too much of a mental burden.

Whatever the foundations of purist misgivings concerning the direction of 'neo-Manx', let us leave the last word to Kewley Draskau:

The apologists of 21st century Manx echo Haugen's balanced conclusion regarding American-Norwegian, that whether the language currently spoken is 'true' in the light of some classical gold standard, it is THEIR language, the language of modern speakers (2004/5: 229)

6.11. Conclusion

Notwithstanding certain reservations, Broderick judges the progress made in the past twenty years to have been consistent, thorough and impressive. Paradoxically, the fact that Manx passed formally into history in 1974 with the death of the last reputed native speaker has released the movement from a psychological burden. 'Manx in its revived form can only go in one direction,

namely upwards' (2012: 164). The revival has been the individual and collective endeavour of numerous individuals and organizations. It has not met with uniform success and, as has been mentioned, lingering historic hostility towards the language was overcome only relatively recently, with those who sought to resurrect the moribund language tending to be regarded as misguided and quixotic. In spite of the obstacles, and in defiance of UNESCO's declaration in 2009 that the language was extinct⁸³, Manx can be now said to be a living language with a modest and modestly increasing number of speakers.⁸⁴ Its position as an everyday spoken language, however, is tenuous and scope for its use minute.⁸⁵ Those involved in the movement are sufficiently pragmatic to acknowledge that the Isle of Man will never again be a Manx-speaking nation, and therefore concentrate on realistic and achievable aims, such as Manx-medium education, Manx language classes for children and adults, and encouraging businesses to use Manx in their

⁸³http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/isle_of_man/8210192.stm. UNESCO's *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* originally categorized Manx as 'extinct' (Moseley 2010), but agreed to change its classification to 'critically endangered, with an indication that it is in the process of revitalisation' after protests from the island. The editor, Christopher Moseley, was invited to the Isle of Man in 2010 to give the annual Ned Maddrell Lecture and expressed appreciation of language revitalization efforts.

⁸⁴ American linguist, K. David Harrison, author of *The Last Speakers: The Quest to Save the World's Most Endangered Languages* (Washington DC: The National Geographic Society) does not hesitate to dub activists 'language warriors': 'From a global perspective, what the Manx language warriors have achieved over the years is exemplary ... Manx revitalisation is a success story – it's one of the bright spots in an otherwise gloomy landscape of language extinction around the world. Its revival is a role model, I can feel the energy, the passion and the inspiration.' 'Manx Gaelic 'warriors' praised for language revival', 5 December 2014: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-isle-of-man-30345741>; accessed 5 March 2015.

⁸⁵ For a very recent and altogether more positive assessment of the Manx revival, see 'How the Manx Language Came back from the Dead', The Guardian newspaper, 2 April 2015: <<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/apr/02/how-manx-language-came-back-from-dead-isle-of-man>>

marketing materials (Stowell 2005, Gawne 2009). It serves admirably the propaganda purposes of the Isle of Man Government in terms of its support for Manx, cements the special status of its citizens, and is in keeping with similar policies at present being pursued throughout Europe to safeguard minority languages. As in Cornwall, linguistic competence is confined to a tiny minority of like-minded individuals while for the population at large, awareness of the existence of the language and the fact that some in their midst are able to communicate in it serves to enrich their understanding of the Island's intangible cultural heritage and the notion of what it means to be Manx.

Chapter 7: Overview and Reflection

As a native of one of the communities under investigation, Sallabank (2013: xi) declares the ‘involved’ nature of her research from the outset, and is careful to position herself as an ‘insider’ with activist leanings, rather than as a dispassionate external observer. An insider perspective, and the insights this might afford, she admits should not preclude a rigorous approach to research. Those researchers with insider credentials, or perceived as possessing them, may feel validated by an aura of authenticity in conducting their research; conversely, outsiders may be intimidated. Andrew Carnie is an interested outsider (a theoretical linguist), who in a paper entitled *Modern Irish: A Case Study in Language Revival Failure* is at pains to make clear that his criticisms of the Irish language revival movement are not a personal attack on those who have invested their lives in attempting to preserve, teach, and revitalize Irish. He offers the highest praise to those who have devoted their time and efforts to the cause. His apologetic tone reveals something of the paradox sociolinguists find themselves in. They do not want to be accused of fouling their own nests or sabotaging or demoralizing activist colleagues by offering anything less than a sanguine appraisal of revitalization efforts. After all, these appraisals may themselves affect the eventual outcomes and defeat the purposes of revitalization. There may too be institutional funding at stake which it would be reckless to jeopardise. Many of the commentators on the Manx and Cornish revivals have themselves been involved in the movement in some capacity or other and as interested parties may be partisan and not entirely trustworthy, particularly in the use and misuse of census data. And where there have been portentous claims, unrealistic expectations and unworkable models, it is important that these are identified so that the practice may be improved.

Attitudes towards the the revival of dead as opposed to dying languages can range from blithe optimism, through incredulity to abject cynicism. Grassroots activists and language enthusiasts tend invariably to be if not upbeat, undeterred. If I were to position myself at the start of this

investigation into the Manx and Cornish revivals, it would be as a sympathetic but sceptical outsider, and that I remain at its finish.

The terminology is a case in point. Sallabank (2013:14) eschews ‘certain terms which have specific meanings in linguistics but which have negative connotations in everyday currency, and may even betray less than respectful ideologies on the part of linguists towards their “subjects”.’ Thus ‘obsolescence’, which may be defined as gradual reduction in use due to domain-restriction and which may be accompanied by historically inappropriate phonological and morphological forms and extensive lexical borrowing, is sacrificed on account of its connotations of uselessness and anachronicity. Similarly unpalatable is ‘moribund’, although its specific meaning as a linguistic term is relatively precise: a language with only a few elderly speakers who no longer use the language for day-to-day communication. She would also jettison ‘semi-speaker’ with its pejorative prefix for the more positive-sounding ‘rememberer’, which ‘evokes the possibility that such speakers may regain or reacquire some partial active use of the language’ (2011: 51). Yet the atrophied competence presupposed by rememberer is potentially misleading in the case of a semi-speaker, whose salient characteristic is imperfect acquisition. A useful if subtle distinction is forfeited if semi-speaker is fused into rememberer. Other euphemisms are ‘latent’ for ‘passive’ speaker, as ‘latent’ communicates a potential for future expressivity. Language ‘death’ itself, it is alleged, may have a causative effect, hastening a language’s demise, or stigmatize a language otherwise susceptible to revival. In an exercise of taboo avoidance, languages without speakers are instead ‘dormant’ or ‘sleeping’. It is odd that denotation within a discipline should be subordinate to connotation outwith it. This euphemistic sanitising of serviceable terminology may seem like pandering to the hypertrophied sensitivities of the activist community, and from a diachronic perspective it is faintly comic to have to regard the hundreds of historically adequately documented but extinct languages as merely dormant and patiently awaiting resurrection from zealous activists. Many would prefer Crystal’s blunter approach: ‘To say that a language is dead is like saying that a person is dead.

It could be no other way – for languages have no existence without people . . . If you are the last speaker of a language, your language – viewed as a tool of communication – is already dead. (2000: 1–2)’. Nettle and Romaine (2000: 48), for example, equate the loss of the last reputed native speaker of Manx in 1974 with the loss of the variety itself and state, ‘that was the end of the Manx language’. This is not to aver that the organic/biological terminology is perfectly coincident. As Aitchison ([1991] 2001: 235) observes, ‘[n]owadays, we no longer have this simple belief that languages behave like beans or chrysanthemums, living out their allotted life, and fading away in due course’ with logically no return conceivable. Though problematic for many, it is an article of faith for some that the dead can be raised.

According to Sallabank (2013:9) ‘it is increasingly common for members of endangered language communities, or their descendants, to want to start using languages again decades or even centuries after the “last [traditional] speakers”’. Miami, Mohegan and Mutsun in the United States, and Karna in Australia are cited as ‘relative successes’ (ibid.). This phenomenon she calls ‘awakening’ or ‘regeneration’, although in light of the aggrieved nature of Celtic historical memory, reclamation might be more appropriate.

Third generation pursuit of an ancestral language is a phenomenon with a fairly obvious social basis. The generation who do not transmit an ethnic language are usually actively in search of a social betterment that they believe they can only achieve by abandoning, among other identifying factors, a stigmatizing language. The first generation secure as to social position is also often the first generation to yearn after the lost language, which by their time is no longer regarded as particularly stigmatizing. Some of these descendants see an ethnolinguistic heritage which eluded them and react to their loss, sadly or even resentfully. This is so widespread and recurrent a response to ancestral language loss as to be something of a cliché among immigrant descended groups (Dorian 1993: 576)

This by and large is appropriate to Manx and Cornish. The Breton case is also

instructive. The number of traditional Breton speakers, the majority in their fifties or older, is predicted to fall from 240,000 to 50,000 in the next ten years. They have chosen not in the main to transmit their language to their children. Reclamation on the part of Breton revivlaists, those acquiring the language through immersion classes or as adults has been achieved but the broken chain of transmission has created a linguistic disjuncture. These néobreton- speakers, ‘predominantly middle-class and from urban backgrounds, ... speak a standardised, pan-Brittanny variety of Breton [and] stands apart in many ways from the traditional dialect speakers, and yet somewhat paradoxically, they are playing an important role in creating the concept of a Breton identity’ (Jones 1998: 129).

This new variety is contested, described as a slightly foreignized variety spoken natively (xenolect) or, in interlanguage terms, an intermediate variety of the target language spoken by foreign learners.⁸⁶ This disjunction and incipient transfer of ownership works in the favour of Manx as it legitimates the “new speakers”. For Manx the locus of authority and authenticity of neo-Manx lies with the 55 completely fluent speakers identified by Ó hIernáin (2015: 55) rather than with the last traditional speakers recorded in the last century.

7. 1. The Cornish Revival

Philip Payton describes how the Cornish language revival ‘has been a puzzle and a problem’ to academics in Celtic Studies, who have for the most part tended to conclude that the revival ‘has been a sham’ (quoted after Dunmore

⁸⁶ For an example of traditional speaker discontent in the Scottish Gaelic context, see Neil Macrae, ‘Gaelic Revival - What Gaelic Revival?’ (Bella Caledonia, 23 August 2013: <http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2013/08/23/gaelic-revival-what-gaelic-revival/>): ‘Concomitant with this disconnect is estrangement from the language as still spoken by native speakers. The subtle, infinitely-nuanced Gaelic of the dying traditional language communities is being replaced, in the usage of the revival organisations, by a clunky, impoverished construct based on English idiom.’

2009: 10). As an essential element of the Cornish Celtic Revival with its abundant invented traditions, bogus bilingual signage, kitch and ‘fakelore’, it is certainly possible to see it in a negative light. And if only one person in a thousand in Cornwall can speak the language, for whom is it a revival? Much the same can be said of Manx. On the other hand, if the sham alluded to is a linguistic one, then there are a number of things to say for the defence. Because there are many morphological and lexical gaps in the Cornish data that cannot be filled and there are aspects of the phonology that are largely irrecoverable, the revived language will certainly change as a consequence of its being reconstituted through the extrapolation of whatever material remains. If the optimal goal of a community of fluent Cornish speakers is achieved, the Cornish they speak will clearly not be the same as the variety their ancestors spoke. The two varieties may not even be mutually intelligible. In response to the criticism that the revitalized form of a dead language is not “genuine” and a sham it could be argued that any form of Cornish is closer to the language spoken by the Cornish 500 years ago than the alternative, since the obvious alternative is to speak English. In the absence of any traditional speakers, a revived variety will achieve its own legitimization through usage. Modern Hebrew is acknowledged to be very different from Biblical Hebrew (Bolzky 1997), but is nevertheless a legitimate version of Hebrew, by virtue of being widely accepted in Israel.

Seventeen years ago, Jones (1998: 344) cast doubt on whether the Cornish had any underlying nationalist unity – ‘[a] problem with which the revival movement must contend is the fact that Cornwall is not perceived as a nation even by the majority of its inhabitants’. Yet, in April 2014 a decision was made to recognise the unique identity of the Cornish, by affording them the same status under the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities as the UK’s other Celtic people, the Scots, the Welsh and the Irish. In addition, the government funding of 120,000 to Cornish Language Partnership to allow them to promote the Cornish language, ‘working with businesses on the use of Cornish in branding and marketing Cornish products, and working with schools to increase the knowledge and

use of the language.’⁸⁷

The use of Cornish is continues even so to be very marginal, being spoken by a tiny minority of mostly educated people. It is worth noting here that around 40 percent of Cornish activists are retired teachers and 60 percent higher educated (Hirner,1999:27). According to the Sgrùd report, in 2000 there were only about 300 fluent speakers of Cornish and perhaps 3,000 people were able to conduct simple conversations in the revived language (Sgrùd 2000:20). The UK Census of 2011 recorded 600 people in England and Wales who claimed their main language to be Cornish, 500 of them in Cornwall, that is to say, only one person per 1,000 inhabitants (Office for National Statistics 2013:7). Most residents of Cornwall are nevertheless aware of the existence of the language, with 92 percent of a sample polled claiming knowledge of its renewed presence and 5.7 percent laying claim detailed knowledge (PFA Research 2007: 102). In the same poll, 31.8 percent of the participants declared themselves favourable to the promotion of Cornish while 9.9 percent of the total *strongly* support it although these are outnumbered by the 20 percent that oppose promotion of Cornish, the majority of the population being indifferent to the issue is also considerable, at about 20 percent, although the majority of the population was indifferent to the issue (PFA Research 2007: 103).

7.2. The Manx Revival

Education planning addresses the need to grow a cohort of younger speakers through formal education and instruction in an indigenous language in the

⁸⁷ UK Government Press Release, 20 March 2014: ‘The Cornish Language Partnership have already done a wide range of things to promote Cornish. They are supporting a web-based Cornish radio service and providing translations and promotional stands at events and festivals, language sessions to around 100 schools and marketing campaigns for Cornwall’s very important tourism and visitor industry.’ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/deputy-prime-minister-announces-thousands-of-pounds-of-new-funding-for-cornish-language>.

hope that they will provide a solid foundation for the future regeneration of the language. The centerpiece of Manx language education programming on the island has been the *Bunscoill Ghaelgagh* (Bunscoill), the Manx medium (immersion) primary school. Despite the fact that the Bunscoill has existed for less than a decade, it has already succeeded in developing a cohort of competent, young Manx speakers. In most cases, however, the parents of these children are not fluent in the language and opportunities to speak Manx outside the school are limited. The development of the language on the island is likely to be severely constrained by the dearth of a Manx medium environment outside the school, especially in the domestic sphere. It is not all clear that the break in intergenerational transmission is meaningfully repaired by the handful of instances in which committed families have chosen use neo-Manx (and neo-Cornish) in the domestic sphere. In only 5 percent of the cases surveyed by Richardson (2008: 27) was Manx was spoken all the time in the home. In the majority of homes, Manx was spoken sometimes (66 percent) and rarely (29 percent) of the cases. Depending on the quantity and quality of input received, these children will grow up with a native-like competence will potentially be a source of authority for other children participating in immersion schemes, possibly acting in a mentor capacity, but it remains to be seen what use the language can be put to in their daily lives outside school or even whether they will be willing to continue using the language. For Cooper (1989: 161) 'no matter how accomplished the schools are in imparting language acquisition, they are unlikely to lead the language's use outside the classroom unless there are practical reasons for such use'. Older school-aged speakers are often more reluctant to engage with the language than younger speakers. There is a risk that some of these older children will lose some of their language skills during their teenage years, thereby hindering the longer term revival of the language. It may be that an undue emphasis has been placed on the introduction of an endangered language into the school curriculum, as it alone rather than the family environment were sufficient to guarantee transmission. Edwards and Newcombe (2005: 137) found that although bilingual education had successfully increased the number of young people who could speak Welsh, it

did not lead to renewal of inter-generational transmission: young people stopped speaking Welsh once they left school. Whether indeed these school-leavers will even choose to remain in their communities or on the island and whether they will be prepared to shoulder the burden of future language activism remains to be seen. Given the so far minute scale of the enterprise, it would not require very many instances of apathy, rebellion and disenchantment to reduce the ranks, leaving revitalization among as precarious as ever.

This is not to say that the bottom-up emphasis on early education is misconceived in the Manx case. It is intuitively satisfying for the elderly or deceased speakers of a dying language to be succeeded by a very young generation of speakers of its revived form, mimicking as this does an organic cycle of decay and renewal, but one must question the wisdom of the experiment if all that awaits these children on leaving school is linguistically a near vacuum, in which Manx is at best inconspicuous and confined to conversation evenings. Fishman insisted on the necessity of proceeding from the bottom up, and of securing intergenerational transmission at home (Stage 6) before proceeding to higher levels, such as use in schools, media, government, etc. It is far easier to establish schools and declare a language official than to get families to speak a threatened language to their children. Yet only the latter will guarantee transmission. This points to the negligible impact of official language policies on home use. The authorities are powerless to dictate what language should be used in the home. In any case, as has been mentioned, many of the parents of children in Manx-medium education may know little or no Manx themselves. Moreover, the motivations involved may not be greatly concerned with the long-term survival of the language. For the majority it was important that their children should forge a sense of Manx identity and be confident individuals (Wilson 2009: 25). For some parents of children in Manx-medium schools, however, it was simply learning a second language that was the overwhelming priority and if there had been other immersion programmes available in the island's educational system, for example in other European languages, they would have

considered sending their children to these programmes rather than the Bunscoill.⁸⁸

Concerted language planning is not lacking. In conjunction with the Manx Heritage Foundation, the Manx Language Officer has produced a language development programme that focuses on the following areas of language planning:

- Planning for Language Learning, which includes supporting language transmission in the family, preschool and at Manx Medium education level.
- Planning for Language Use: includes the promotion of cultural tourism and developing the use of Manx in the public, private and voluntary sectors.
- Status Planning: raising the visibility of the language and encouraging the Government to work towards compliance with the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages.
- Corpus planning: the need for linguistic standardization and the development of specialized terminology (Manx Heritage Foundation, 2013).

These areas generally conform to the accepted components of language planning and reveal a comprehensive plan for the development of the language in the future.

Wilson et al. (2015) report anecdotally an expanding number of learners and fluent speakers. The regeneration of interest in the language is beyond doubt.⁸⁹ The commitment and dedication of both the Manx authorities are to

⁸⁸ The present Manx language officer, Adrian Cain, in celebrating ten years of existence of the *Bunscoile* and an enrolment of seventy in 2012, also stresses the advantages of a bilingual education in addition to the preservation of linguistic heritage. The televised interview may be accessed at: <http://www.manx.net/tv/mt-tv/watch/4787/manx-school-celebrates>.

⁸⁹ An ethnographic study of Manx and Cornish learners remains to be carried out.

be applauded. It is premature to predict the outcome of Manx-medium education but it may well be that Manx-learning will reach a plateau. The language will continue to be an object of interest, recognized and applauded as a community asset, for contributing to a positive and distinctive island identity, but still largely confined to individuals and relatively small groups of enthusiasts. In neither case is the heritage language an indispensable part of the community's identity, of community members' sense of self, and an indispensable repository of the community's culture

A localized community of speakers, analogous for example to the Israeli kibbutzim, in which Cornish and Manx are everyday languages of communication is still a very distant prospect, one we should discard as neither realistic nor attainable.

In summary, Cornwall and the Isle of Man share a similarly peripheral, (pen)insular physical environment. They were subjected to the same centripetal pressures from the overwhelming dominance, economic, social and political of the Anglo-culture to the east. Both were debilitated by early loss of sovereignty and eviction from the high domains of administration and the law. In a protracted period of language shift, their languages dwindled and lost all social and cultural status, eventually becoming stigmatized and denigrated even by those that spoke them. Cornish had had a sizeable literature but no Bible, Manx a Bible but a negligible literature. Methodism passed Cornish by but came to the aid of Manx. By the eighteenth century in Cornwall, the nineteenth in Man, they were extinct as everyday community languages and confined to the remoter fringes of their respective territories and to the speech of the poorest and least educated. Their revivals arose

Chapman (1978: 213-14) characterized those attending Scottish Gaelic language courses as consisting of four recognizable groups: those with an academic interest in Gaelic; those who learn it to sing in Gaelic singing competitions, especially the Annual National Mòd; those who are seeking their Highland roots, often from overseas; and lastly students who are pursuing a radical or romantic yearning, or who are studying Celtic at university. *Mutatis mutandis*, much the same could be said of Manx and Cornish.

among the best educated, all middle-class, well-intentioned, patriotic, and committed to salvaging the debris of their respective linguistic heritages, but with no serious intention of reintroducing Cornish or Manx as spoken vernaculars. Both revivals were galvanized by economic disappointments. Their territories have native populations that are now outnumbered by incomers, so casting into sharp relief the question of continuity of identity. Both movements remain obstinately minute in scale, with neither able to attract more than a few thousand learners; fluent speakers do not exceed a few hundred. The lack of any village- or town-based, tangible speech community is common to both. Speakers are spread non-territorially throughout society and any future face-to face community would in any case have to contend with the migratory flux of diaspora and immigration. The geography of Cornwall and the Isle of Man can offer no asylum from the Anglosphere. They are close to its centre and participate in a global society, as subject as any region to its powerful political, and economic forces. A post-modern revitalization project must take cognizance of what the languages can be deployed for in such circumstances. Essentially, they serve symbolically to configure a non-English (but not necessarily adversarial) identity. For this reason, they enjoy a large measure of popular support. As Carkeek writes of Cornish,

Language is a key, effective and efficient core value and in the situation of past identity markers being eroded, incentives for its adoption as such must be seen as overwhelming. ... There is no appetite to personally adopt the language, nor any substantial willingness to finance an actual spoken revival. The desire is to embrace a core value to support the identity of a nation without a state, in its pursuit for recognition as culturally distinct, in an evolving era of international interconnectedness and political restructuring of (post-) modern society (2009: 287-8).

This core value depends on a symbiotic relationship between learners and non-learners. The non-learner majority rely on a nucleus of language learners

to maintain and develop the spoken language, even at a minimal level, should others choose to learn it in the future, but also to validate the authenticity of the language as a re-adopted value in the identity politics of the early twenty-first century. The language learners, equally, require the public's support, to justify development of the language and to develop learning opportunities, infrastructure, and institutional support. The tacit bond between the two underlies the reawakening of an 'emotional motivation' (Jones 1998: 348) to champion the language revival.

Michel de Montaigne (1533-92) was very successfully brought up by his father's servants to speak Latin as his first language but there was no community in which he could later use it.⁹⁰ Spoken Latin is currently enjoying a modest revival, with residential courses organized and various societies flourishing. Latin is used in the Wikipedia; since 1989 Finland has offered a spoken and written news service *Nuntii Latini* from their national broadcaster YLE. Latin blog and chat sites come and go (Ostler 2007:312). J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series have been translated into Latin (*Harrius Potter et Philosophi Lapis*, 2003)⁹¹ and the vocabulary is periodically updated (*Lexicon Recentis Latinitatis Vaticanense*, 2003). Latin is used for marketing and branding of various sorts, as Manx and Cornish are. Everyone knows of its existence and many can say a phrase or two but mastery is for the few. A recent historian of the language has confessed that he acts as a consultant for those opting for tattoos in Latin.⁹² Latin in its later history was of course a quintessentially universal language; Manx and Cornish are decidedly local vernaculars, yet it is not facetious to suggest that the parallels are real. All three dead languages are available as markers of identity and equally objects of amateur enthusiasm. Even if the Manx and Cornish revitalization projects

⁹⁰ Essays, I, 26.

⁹¹ Similarly, there are Cornish translations of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. For an ongoing project in Cornish translation, see the online Everttype Publishing catalogue here:

<http://www.everttype.com/cornish.html>

⁹² Jürgen Leonhardt, *Latin: Story of a World Language* (2009; trans. 2013). Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, p. 284.

are eventually judged formal failures by their own criteria, the revenant languages need not be reinterred. They are always there to be learned by whoever has the time and interest to investin them.

Grenoble and Whaley (2006: ix) note that ‘an honest evaluation of most language revitalization efforts to date will show that they have failed’. The Manx and Cornish revivals may be described as examples of imperfect revitalization: they have not yet failed but nor have they quite succeeded in achieving the goals set. Romaine characterizes revitalization as ‘not necessarily attempting to bring the language back to former patterns of use but rather to bring it forward to new users and uses’ (2006: 464). Manx and Cornish remain in urgent need of both.

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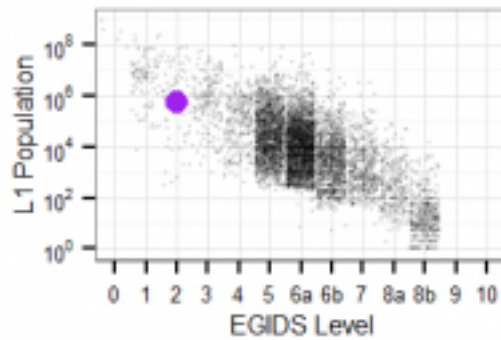
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Appendix 1a

Ethnologue Data on Current Status of the Celtic Languages⁹³

1) Welsh

⁹³Lewis, M. Paul, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.). 2015. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Eighteenth edition*. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com>. The EGIDS scale refers to the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale developed by Lewis and Simons (2010).



EGIDS level: 2 (Provincial) — The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government within major administrative subdivisions of a nation.

Population

508,000 in United Kingdom (1991 census), decreasing. Population total all countries: 536,890. 32,700 monolinguals (1971 census).

Language Status

2 (Provincial). De facto provincial language in Wales.

Dialects

Northern Welsh, Patagonian Welsh, Southern Welsh.

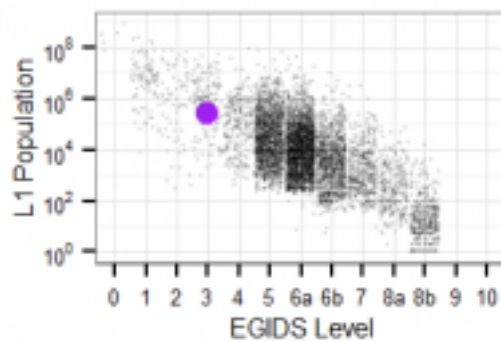
Language Use

19 percent of the Welsh population speak it; 33 percent understand it (1998). 44,600 between 5 and 9 years old, 47,100 between 10 and 14 years old (1991). Positive attitudes. 542,000 also use English.

Language Development

Welsh as the medium for education is increasing. 525 primary and secondary schools provide Welsh as the medium of education to over 82,000 children (1999). Compulsory in most Welsh schools. The Royal National Eisteddfod meets annually. Magazines. New media. Radio programs. TV. Dictionary. Grammar. Bible: 1588–2004.

2) Irish



EGIDS level: 3 (Wider Communication) — The language is used in work and mass media without official status to transcend language differences across a region.

Population

138,000 in Ireland (European Commission 2012). Population total all countries: 276,310. L2 users: 1,000,000 in Ireland (European Commission 2012).

Location

Cork, Donegal, Galway, Kerry, part of Mayo, Meath, and Waterford counties. Western isles northwest and southwest coasts.

Language Status

3 (Wider communication). Statutory language of national identity (1937, Constitution, Article 8(1)). Widely used as L2 in all parts of the country (Salminen 2007).

Dialects

Connacht (Western Irish), Donegal (Northern Irish, Ulster), Munster-Leinster (Southern Irish).

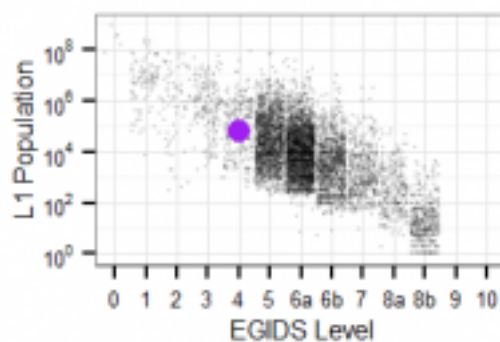
Language Use

A number of children learn the language but the number is decreasing (Salminen 2007). Also use English (Salminen 2007).

Language Development

New media. Radio programs. Dictionary. Grammar. Bible: 1685–1981.

3) Scottish Gaelic



EGIDS level: 4 (Educational) — The language is in vigorous use, with standardization and literature being sustained through a widespread system of institutionally supported education.

Population

58,700 in United Kingdom (2001 census). Population total all countries: 63,130.

Location

Scotland, north and central Ross and Cromarty counties; islands of Hebrides and Skye; Glasgow.

Language Status

4 (Educational). Statutory provincial language in Scotland (2005, Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act).

Dialects

Biblical Gaelic is based on the 1801 Perthshire dialect, somewhat distant from today's spoken dialects.

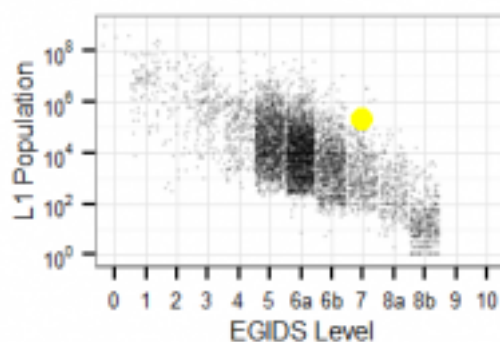
Language Use

Resurgence of interest in Scottish Gaelic in 1990s. A number of children learn the language but there are serious problems in language maintenance even in the core areas (Salminen 2007). Home, church, community.

Language Development

Literacy rate in L1: 50 percent (1971 census). In bilingual areas Gaelic usually is the language of instruction for most primary subjects. Taught in primary schools. Gaelic secondary schools. Magazines. Newspapers. New media. Radio programs. Dictionary. Grammar. Bible: 1801–1992.

4) Breton



EGIDS level: 7 (Shifting) — The child-bearing generation can use the

language among themselves, but it is not being transmitted to children.

Population

206,000 (2013 R. Milin), decreasing.

Location

Bretagne region: Finistere, western Cotes-d'Armor, and western Morbihan departments; elsewhere dispersed.

Language Status

7 (Shifting).

Dialects

Gwenedeg (Vannetais), Kerneveg (Cornouaillais), Leoneg (Leonais), Tregerieg (Tregorrois).

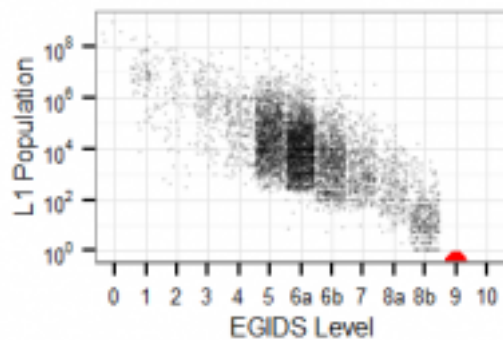
Language Use

Strong nationalistic movement demanding recognition, a place in the schools, media, and public life. 75 percent of the estimated 200,000–250,000 Breton speakers using Breton as an everyday language today are over the age of 65. A small number of children are learning the language but it is not clear if they continue to use it in adulthood (Salminen 2007). Also use French.

Language Development

Literacy rate in L1: 25 percent. An average of 15,000 students in Breton language and bilingual schools. Taught in primary and secondary schools. New media. Radio programs. TV. Dictionary. Grammar. Bible: 1866–1985.

5) Manx



EGIDS level: 9 (Dormant) — The language serves as a reminder of heritage identity for an ethnic community, but no one has more than symbolic proficiency.

Population

No known L1 speakers, but emerging L2 speakers. L2 users: Several hundred who mainly learned it as adults. Last L1 native speaker died in 1974.

Language Status

9 (Reawakening).

Dialects

None known. Reportedly similar to Scottish Gaelic.

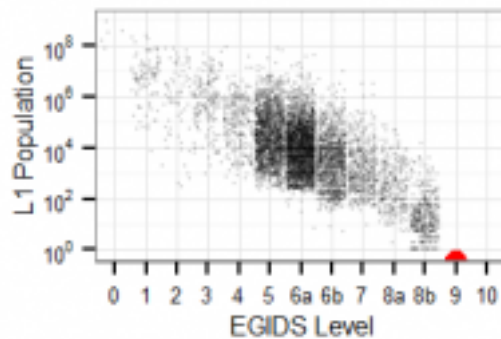
Language Use

Supplanted by Manx vernacular English, which in turn is supplanted by other varieties of English. Some people are using Manx with their children. There is a strong a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language. (2013 N. Rees). Some public functions. Also use English.

Language Development

Taught as a second language in all secondary schools (2013 N. Rees). Taught in primary schools since 2001. New media. Grammar. Bible: 1773.

6) Cornish



EGIDS level: 9 (Dormant) — The language serves as a reminder of heritage identity for an ethnic community, but no one has more than symbolic proficiency.

Population

No known L1 speakers, but emerging L2 speakers. Ethnic population: 532,000 (2011 census). L2 users: A few L2 speakers in Canada, Australia, Austria, and Brittany (France).

Location

Cornwall.

Language Status

9 (Reawakening).

Dialects

None known. Related to Breton, Welsh, Gaulish (extinct), Irish, Manx Gaelic, and Scottish Gaelic.

Language Use

Religious services held in Cornish. Evening classes, correspondence courses, summer camps, children's play groups, residential courses. There is now a full time Cornish language nursery school being set up. Since 2009 approximately 50 children between the ages of 1 and 7 have attended the setting for significant periods of time. Some children grow up bilingual in English [eng].

Language Development

Taught in some schools. Taught in some schools. Magazines. New media. Dictionary. Grammar. NT: 2002–2004.

EGIDS Scale Graphs

The graphs show the place of the respective language within the cloud of all living languages. Each language in the world is represented by a small dot that is placed on the grid in relation to its population (in the vertical axis) and its level of development or endangerment (in the horizontal axis), with the largest and strongest languages in the upper left and the smallest and weakest languages (down to extinction) in the lower right. The population value is the estimated number of first language (L1) speakers; it is plotted on a logarithmic scale (where $10^0 = 1$; $10^2 = 100$; $10^4 = 10,000$; $10^6 = 1,000,000$; $10^8 = 100,000,000$). The value for the development versus endangerment dimension is the estimated level on the EGIDS scale.

The colour-coded EGIDS levels are grouped as follows:

- 1 Purple = Institutional (EGIDS 0-4) — The language has been developed to the point that it is used and sustained by institutions beyond the home and community.
 - 2 Blue = Developing (EGIDS 5) — The language is in vigorous use, with literature in a standardized form being used by some though this is not yet widespread or sustainable.
 - 3 Green = Vigorous (EGIDS 6a) — The language is unstandardized and in vigorous use among all generations.
 - 4 Yellow = In trouble (EGIDS 6b-7) — Intergenerational transmission is in the process of being broken, but the child-bearing generation can still use the language so it is possible that revitalization efforts could restore transmission of the language in the home.
 - 5 Red = Dying (EGIDS 8a-9) — The only fluent users (if any) are older than child-bearing age, so it is too late to restore natural intergenerational transmission through the home; a mechanism outside the home would need to be developed.
- Black = Extinct (EGIDS 10) — The language has fallen completely out of use and no one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language.

Endangered Languages

Language endangerment is a serious concern to which linguists and language planners have turned their attention in the last several decades. For a variety of reasons, speakers of many smaller, less dominant languages stop using their heritage language and begin using another. Parents may begin to use only that second language with their children and gradually the intergenerational transmission of the heritage language is reduced and may even cease. As a consequence there may be no speakers who use the language as their first or primary language and eventually the language may no longer be used at all. A language may become dormant or extinct, existing perhaps only in recordings or written records and transcriptions. Languages which

have not been adequately documented disappear altogether.

Defining language endangerment

Language endangerment is a matter of degree. At one end of the scale are languages that are vigorous, and perhaps are even expanding in numbers of speakers or functional areas of use, but nevertheless exist under the shadow of a more dominant language. At the other end are languages that are on the verge of extinction (that is, loss of all individuals who continue to identify the language as being related to their identity). In between are many degrees of greater or lesser vitality.

There are two dimensions to the characterization of endangerment: the number of *users* who identify with a particular language and the number and nature of the *uses* or functions for which the language is employed. A language may be endangered because there are fewer and fewer people who claim that language as their own and therefore neither use it nor pass it on to their children. It may also, or alternatively, be endangered because it is being used for fewer and fewer daily activities and so loses the characteristically close association of the language with particular social or communicative functions. Form follows function and languages which are being used for fewer and fewer domains of life also tend to lose structural complexity, which in turn may affect the perceptions of users regarding the suitability of the language for use in a broader set of functions. This can lead to a downward spiral which eventually results in the complete loss of the language.

The concern about language endangerment is centered, first and foremost, around the factors which motivate speakers to abandon their language and the social and psychological consequences of language death for the community of (former) speakers of that language. Since language is closely linked to culture, loss of language almost always is accompanied by social and cultural disruptions. More broadly, the intangible heritage of all of human society is diminished when a language disappears. Secondly, those concerned about

language endangerment recognize the implications of the loss of linguistic diversity both for the linguistic and social environment generally and for the academic community which is devoted to the study of language as a human phenomenon.

Evaluating language endangerment

The best way to identify the level of vitality of a language has not always been clear. However, a scholarly consensus that can be applied worldwide is developing, and a global evaluation of the state of language vitality is becoming increasingly possible. Sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists seek to identify trends in language use through the description of some direct measures of language vitality such as changes in the number of speakers or in the use of the language in certain domains or functions. Less directly, an increase in bilingualism, both in the number of bilinguals and in their proficiency levels, is often associated with these trends, though a high level of bilingualism is not, in itself, a sufficient condition for language shift or death. In addition there are numerous economic, political and social factors that affect a community's self perception and motivations.

Ethnologue reports data that are indicators of the two major dimensions of language use (users and functions). When data are available, we report the following factors which may contribute to the assessment of language endangerment:

- 6 The speaker population
- 7 The ethnic population; the number of those who connect their ethnic identity with the language (whether or not they speak the language)
- 8 The stability of and trends in that population size
- 9 Residency and migration patterns of speakers
- 10 The use of second languages
- 11 The use of the language by others as a second language
- 12 Language attitudes within the community

- 13 The age range of the speakers
- 14 The domains of use of the language
- 15 Official recognition of languages within the nation or region
- 16 Means of transmission (whether children are learning the language at home or being taught the language in schools)
- 17 Non-linguistic factors such as economic opportunity or the lack thereof

Such factors interact within a society in dynamic ways that are not entirely predictable but which do follow recognizable patterns and trends. The general scholarly consensus, however, is that the key factor in gauging the relative safety of an endangered language is the degree to which intergenerational transmission of the language remains intact.

Language endangerment and the EGIDS

Because of the complexity of the interrelated factors, it is helpful to categorize the vitality of a language using a summary label. Various schemas have been proposed, each with a particular focus. For various reasons, none of these are entirely adequate for a comprehensive global assessment of the state of the world's languages. The Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale or EGIDS (Lewis and Simons 2010) was developed specifically to fill this gap.

We report a vitality estimate for every identified language in each country where that language is spoken. This is done by reporting the estimated EGIDS level in each language entry (under the label *Status*); see [Language Status](#) for the definitions of the levels.

The summary of the world language situation in terms of Institutional, Developing, and Vigorous languages is described in the [Language Development](#) page. On the endangerment side of the EGIDS scale we distinguish three additional summary categories.

The first two steps down the endangerment side of the EGIDS scale are levels

6b (Threatened) and 7 (Shifting). These two levels have in common that intergenerational transmission is in the process of being broken, but the child-bearing generation can still use the language. These languages are represented by the yellow bars in the summary graphs; as a class they are referred to as “In Trouble” languages. Since parents can still use the language, it is not too late to restore natural intergenerational transmission in the home. It is possible that revitalization efforts could achieve this by focusing on the motivations of parents. We report this to be the condition of 1,531 (or 22 percent) of the 7,102 known living languages in the world.

The next summary category includes levels 8a through 9 which are classed as “Dying” languages. These languages are represented by the red bars in the summary graphs. At these levels, the child-bearing generation is no longer able to transmit the language to the next generation, since the only fluent users (if any remain) are above that age. Revitalization efforts would need to develop mechanisms outside the home in order to transmit the language. We report this to be the condition of 916 (or 13 percent) of the 7,102 known living languages in the world.

Finally, there are the “Extinct” languages at level 10. These languages are represented by black bars in the summary graphs for each country. These languages have fallen completely out of (even symbolic) use, since no one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language. With extinct languages, the *Ethnologue* lists only those that have become extinct since 1950 (which is when the *Ethnologue* began publication). We report 367 such languages in the current edition. This is a rate of loss amounting to 6 languages per year.

Appendix 1b



UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger⁹⁴

1) Welsh

<i>Vitality</i>	Vulnerable
<i>Number of speakers</i>	750000 Estimate based on the 2001 census
<i>Location(s)</i>	Wales and adjacent parts of England; émigré communities in Patagonia

2) Irish

<i>Vitality</i>	Definitely endangered
<i>Number of speakers</i>	44000 In 2007. Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht affairs of Ireland: number of people living in primarily Irish-speaking areas; extinct as a first language in Northern Ireland; widely

⁹⁴Moseley, Christopher (ed.). 2010. Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger, 3rd edn. Paris, UNESCO Publishing. Online version:
<http://www.unesco.org/culture/en/endangeredlanguages/atlas>

studied as a second language

3) Scottish Gaelic (currently unavailable)

4) Breton

<i>Vitality</i>	Severely endangered
<i>Number of speakers</i>	250000 Estimate based on various sources
<i>Location(s)</i>	western Brittany; many émigré communities






5) Manx

<i>Vitality</i>	Critically endangered
<i>Number of speakers</i>	The last speaker of traditional Manx, Ned Maddrell, died in 1974. Since then, however, the language has been undergoing active revitalization in family, school and institutional contexts.

6) Cornish

<i>Vitality</i>	Critically endangered
<i>Number of speakers</i>	The last speaker of traditional Cornish died at the end of the 18th century, but there have nevertheless been several proposals

for revived Cornish which have led to largely successful attempts to reestablish a variety of indigenous language traditions in Cornwall.

Degree of endangerment Intergenerational Language Transmission	
<i>safe</i>	language is spoken by all generations; intergenerational transmission is uninterrupted >> <i>not included in the Atlas</i>
 <i>vulnerable</i>	most children speak the language, but it may be restricted to certain domains (e.g., home)
 <i>definitely endangered</i>	children no longer learn the language as mother tongue in the home
 <i>severely endangered</i>	language is spoken by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to children or among themselves
 <i>critically endangered</i>	the youngest speakers are grandparents and older, and they speak the language partially and infrequently
 <i>extinct</i>	there are no speakers left >> <i>included in the Atlas if presumably extinct since the 1950s</i>

